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RUSSIANS TELL THE STORY

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RUSSIANS TELL THE STORY

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*Sketches of the War on the Soviet—
German Front from "Soviet War News"*

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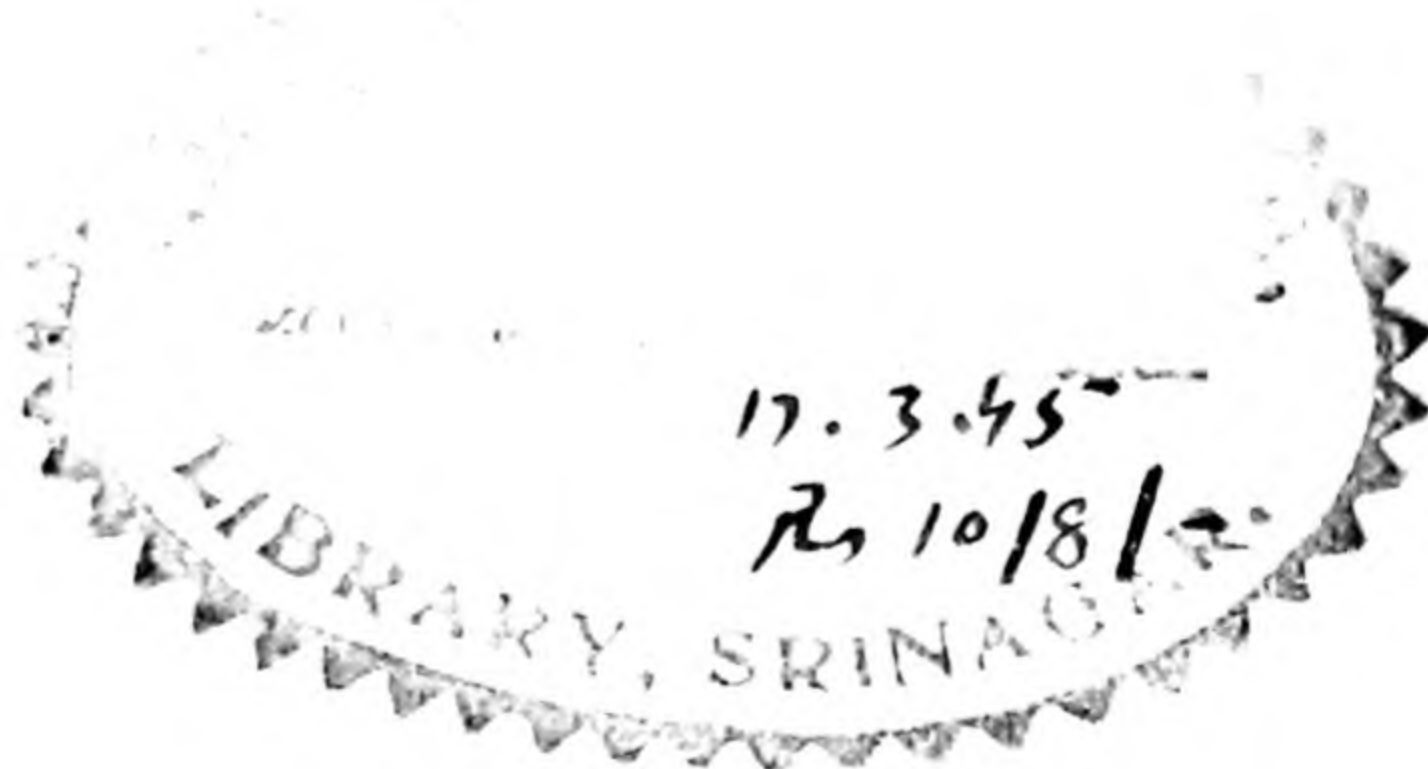
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ON THE WAY TO THE FRONT

By Mikhail Sholokhov

Somewhere in Smolensk Region

ARMED WITH PENCILS, NOTEBOOKS AND LIGHT MACHINE GUNS, WE GO BY CAR to the front, speeding past innumerable lorries carrying Red Army men, ammunition, provisions to the front line positions.

All the cars are cleverly camouflaged with branches of birch and fir; looking down on the road from a hill one gets the impression of forests moving in a weird procession from east to west.

The booming of artillery guns from the west grows steadily louder. The front is near at hand, but Red Army signallers continue to wave yellow and red flags; a stream of lorries speeds onward, while powerful tractors crawl along at the edges of the road with a loud clatter.

We are warned to expect an air attack at any moment. We take turns standing on the running-board watching the sky, but no German planes appear and we continue our journey undisturbed.

The landscape in the Smolensk region is strange to me, a native of the almost woodless Don steppes. My eyes follow the unfolding scenery with interest. Pine forests rise in green walls on either side of the road, giving out a cool, pungent, tarry scent. In the forest thickets there is a semi-darkness even by day, and there is something ominous and sinister about the gloomy silence—something evil, it seems to me, about the soil covered with tall ferns and half-rotted tree stumps.

Now and again a bush of elderberries makes a splash of scarlet on the sunlit meadow of young birch and ash trees, and then once more the forest closes in on both sides. Presently there is a sudden vision of undulating fields of rye or oats trampled by troops, and somewhere on the slope of a hill there are the black patches of ruined villages razed by the Germans.

We switch off into a country lane. Germans were here only a few days back. Now they have been driven out, but traces of recent furious fighting are left all round: in mutilated, yawning caverns left by shells, mines and bombs; innumerable holes. We come across the bodies of men and horses more frequently. The sweetish, nauseating odour of dead bodies causes us to hold our breath. Not far from the road lies the swollen body of a bay mare, and beside the mother a tiny colt body lies dead, lifeless bushy tail outspread—so tragically unnecessary: this little dead colt on the big battlefield.

German group and individual trenches on a hill slope are ploughed up by our shells. Around the parapets of splintered roofs lie empty cartridges, empty tin cans, helmets, shapeless shreds of grey-green German uniforms, fragments of smashed weapons and torn telephone wires twisted into fantastic shapes. A direct hit from a shell destroyed the machine gun, together with its crew. Through the doorway of a shed not far from the trenches a mutilated anti-tank gun is visible—a terrible picture of the destruction caused by the hurricane of fire from Soviet artillery.

A village for which furious battles were fought for several days stands on the other side of the hill. Before withdrawing, the Germans razed it to the ground. Down below Red Army sappers are building a bridge over a small stream. The air is scented with pine shavings and river slime. The sappers

are working shirtless. Their sunburned backs, moist with perspiration, gleam in the sunshine as do the fresh boards of the bridge covering.

We drive slowly over a row of logs on the unfinished bridge. The mud on the roadside is churned up by tank and tractor treads. We drive into what recently was the village. There I see charred remains of houses on either side of the road. Smoke-blackened stovepipes alone remain, jutting out of the debris; heaps of bricks where once were dwellings, charred household utensils, fragments of broken dishes, a child's bed with the spring mattress warped by flames.

Against a grim background of desolation stands a single sunflower, by some miracle left unscathed. There is something incredibly, sacrilegiously lovely about the golden innocence of this flower growing a few yards from the foundation of the burned house, in the midst of trampled potato fields, its petals slightly singed by flames, its stalk powdered with brickdust—but it is alive! It lives on stubbornly amid a scene of death and destruction; and it seems as if this sunflower, swaying gently in the breeze, is the only living thing in this graveyard.

But it is not so. Leaving the car, we walk silently through the streets and suddenly we see a yellow cat sitting on a black, smoke-begrimed wall. She is busy washing herself. She behaves as if she had never witnessed the horrors that deprived her of home and human friends. Observing us, she stops dead for a second and then vanishes in a flash among the ruins.

Two hens—both widows bereaved of a cock and farmyard friends—would not let us approach within forty yards of them. They were tranquilly hunting for food, pecking at a trampled vegetable patch, but the moment they saw men dressed in khaki they scuttled off without a sound. "They must have mistaken our uniforms for German," remarked one of my companions who had fought in recent battles here.

He told me that the Germans stage regular hunts after domestic fowls, geese, hens and ducks in the villages they occupy. Cows and pigs are slaughtered in sheds and birds difficult to catch are shot with automatic rifles.

"Well, we can't blame those hens for being careful," he added. "They've certainly been under fire."

It is touching to see how animals and birds grow attached to homes. In the same village I saw a flock of doves fluttering sadly over the ruins of a church demolished by German shells. They had evidently lived in the belfry and although their home had gone, they could not fly away from the place where they once lived in peace and comfort.

In a lane a small dog crawled up to meet us, wagging his tail apologetically. He might not have possessed what is called "canine dignity," but he had the courage required to return home alone through the forest to the ruins of his home. At the edge of the village, in a hemp field, we frightened a flock of sparrows. They were nothing like the lively, twittering, busy sparrows we are accustomed to see in peace time. They circled over the burnt village silent and sorrowful; then flew back and, fluffing their feathers, perched forlornly on some hemp stalks.

Women collective-farmers have the same strong attachment for the village. The men had gone to the front. The women and children took shelter in neighbouring villages when the Germans came. Now they have returned to the razed village and wander forlornly amid the ruins, rummaging in brick piles in search of some memento from their former homes. At night they take to the forests, where Red Army reserve units feed them from field kitchens. But

in the daytime they go back to their villages like birds fluttering around their devastated nests.

In the next village, also in ruins, I saw several collective-farm women and children searching for remnants of their belongings. I asked one woman where she intended living now. "Drive those accursed Germans further away from here," she replied, "and don't bother about us. We will manage somehow. The village Soviet will help us. We'll get along all right."

The haggard faces grey with soot and ashes, the inflamed eyes of children and women remained imprinted on my memory for a long time. I could not help thinking what blind diabolical hatred for every living thing one must have to wipe off the face of the earth peaceful towns and villages, senselessly, aimlessly, to burn and destroy everything. We passed through another village and once again the forest surrounded us.

We drove past fields with unharvested grain, a plot of faded flax, with little blue flowers still growing, a Red Army sentry standing by the roadside and a warning notice on a pole sticking up out of a flax field: "Mined field."

The retreating Germans had mined roads and ditches and had abandoned their cars, their own trenches and even the corpses of their soldiers.

Our sappers were busy de-mining territory. We saw their bent, searching figures everywhere, but meantime cars and trucks drove carefully over mined sectors and sentries kept watch to prevent anyone going into the danger zone.

The cacaphony of artillery firing rises to crescendo and now we can distinguish the thunder of the Soviet heavy batteries—music to our ears.

Before long we arrive at the positions of one of our reserve units. These men, almost fresh from the firing lines, now listen to an accordion playing sotto voce beside a dugout. Some 20 Red Army men are standing in a circle, laughing gaily at a young stocky fellow in the centre. Lazily he dances, his powerful shoulders and patches of salt-dried sweat gleaming on the back of his green shirt. Slapping his kneeboots with huge palms, he challenges a comrade, a tall, gawky Red Army man: "Come on, now, shake a leg, don't be bashful! You're from Ryazan and I'm from Orlov. Come on, let's see who can hoof it better!"

Soon the brief twilight darkens the forest and silence descends on the camp. To-morrow at dawn we set off to Commander Kozlov's unit, which is conducting an offensive.

A MOSCOW A.R.P. WARDEN

By Yuzovsky

I HAD HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT THIS IVAN SEMYONOVICH CHAP. ANY TIME YOU mentioned A.R.P. work in our district of Moscow his name would crop up. It was "Ivan Semyonovich said this . . ." "Ivan Semyonovich suggested that . . ." So in the end I decided to investigate this mysterious person.

There was no trouble in finding him. You only had to mention his name and everyone said: "Oh, yes—you want Ivan Semyonovich—certainly, right this way."

I arrived at an A.R.P. post. A bunch of fine strapping lads were there, strong and capable looking. Their leader must be a hero of a chap, I thought.

Imagine my surprise when I met Ivan Semyonovich—a puny little grey-haired old man.

He was quick to notice my embarrassment and read my thoughts.

"Yes," he said, a little defiantly, "I am sixty-four years old and retired on a pension. I used to be a house-painter."

It appears that when war was declared he went to his house committee and presented the following document which he had composed himself:—

In view of the scoundrelly attack of Hitler's gangs on our Socialist fatherland of working-people, I declare myself mobilised until the final annihilation of the Fascist abomination. I undertake to fulfil all obligations in the defence of houses from air attack.

(Signed) *Ivan Semyonovich Fedoseyev.*

22nd June, 1941.

Then he got busy. He collected fire equipment. He collected people to use it. He showed the people how to work the equipment. I asked him how he did it all.

"It's a question of the right approach," he said, twirling his grey moustache. "That's what you need in dealing with people. For instance, we had one chap in our house, a very respectable citizen—yes, you should see his grand whiskers—but full of the wrong ideas.

"As soon as it got dark he used to make a bee-line for the air-raid shelter. Never mind, I thought to myself, I'll cure him. I tipped off the women in the shelter—and they knew what to do. They gave it to him good and proper. Pretty soon he came slinking along. 'Ivan Semyonovich,' he says, 'for goodness sake give me something to do. Those women will be the death of me.' Well, now he's manning a hose right at the top of the house, as brave as they make them. That's the right approach for you."

So we went up on the roof. I realised then that the roof was to Ivan Semyonovich like a ship's bridge is to a captain. Everything was in ship-shape order: spades, axes, hooks, fire-tongs, piles of sand, fire-hoses and stirrup-pumps.

His eye landed on an empty bucket.

"Hey, Sasha—what's this?"

"Plenty of time to refill it before nightfall," said Sasha.

"That's what you say. And supposing the siren goes this minute . . . what then? Go on, jump to it, lad!"

Advising, prompting, scolding—he kept everyone busy and happy. Talkative, full of jokes and good cheer—that's the captain of this A.R.P. group. He walked about the roof as he talked to me, twirling his moustache, waving his arms and paying no attention to me whatever. I might have fallen over the parapet and the captain would still go on talking.

When I sat down he took this for a sign of weakness.

"Feeling a little tired," he said. "Poor chap. It's on account of your youth. When you reach my age you'll have more strength and experience. Who knows—you might even be appointed an A.R.P. chief!"

I heard afterwards how during a raid he had worked all night, going from point to point, helping wherever the danger was greatest. Always a cheery word of encouragement. No wonder the people in his team are so fond of him. When one of his men was burned on the face he helped to tend him.

"There'll be a red mark there," the man said.

"Where . . .," cried Ivan Semyonovich. "I can't see any red mark. Nonsense, man—you're handsomer than ever."

When I left this unheroic-looking, sixty-four-year-old hero, I mentioned

that I intended to write something about him in the papers. He beamed with pleasure.

"Now that's fine," he said. "That's what I call the right approach." Coming closer to me, he added in a confidential whisper, "You can't imagine how nice it is to read about yourself in the papers. Gives you a real thrill."

So here is a little testimonial to one of the many Muscovites, old and young, man or woman, who have sprung out of obscurity into the front line of battle—the battle against the fire-bomb and the high-explosive. In Moscow, as in London, the Ordinary Man is doing his bit.

HOW I BECAME A GUERILLA FIGHTER

By Red Army Man Omelchenko

IT WAS ON A DAY IN AUGUST, WHILE I WAS ON RECONNAISSANCE DUTY, THAT I was taken prisoner. The Germans brought me to a village which they had just captured.

The officer ordered me to undress and when I refused I was beaten and my clothes were torn from my back. I was left wearing only my shorts.

Fighting was going on nearby. The Germans were few in number and they felt nervous. The officer ordered me to proceed on foot to the neighbouring village where there was the headquarters of a German detachment.

"I can't spare anyone to go with you," he said. "You won't run away naked and if you try you'll be shot. They'll take you in custody over there. Thank your stars we didn't kill you."

I set off along the road. All around were open fields. A group of tanks came speeding towards me and raising a thick cloud of dust. The dust hid me from the enemy and I dived into a ditch, crawled out on the other side and dashed across a field. When the dust began to subside I threw myself on the ground and crept along on my belly.

Some time later I reached some thick bushes and lay there until nightfall, my ears alert for every sound. Towards evening it grew chilly. I tried to prevent myself from shivering but my teeth were soon chattering with cold. Cautiously I rose and moved in the direction of the front, taking cover in bushes and copses and crawling across open spaces.

The sky and fields were lit up by the glow of a big fire—a village was burning. I had to turn aside from the blaze. I walked on all night and when dawn came I collapsed from fatigue in a wood.

I was awakened by pangs of hunger which the wild strawberries I had gathered were unable to allay. I went on through the forest—but towards evening I realised that I had lost my way. No firing could be heard. However hard I tried I could not find my way out of the forest. In desperation I scrambled through bushes, branches scratching against my face and naked body.

After a time rain began to fall. My lacerated feet could carry me no further. I covered myself with moss and leaves and fell asleep. That was the end of my second day.

On the morning of my third day I could scarcely stretch my numbed limbs. In a semi-delirious condition I staggered on, acting more by instinct than by judgment. So I went on for five days.

On the sixth day I woke up and found an old peasant standing before me.

"Where are you from and why are you naked?" he asked me.

"I was captured by the Germans and ran away," I told him.

He shook his head sadly.

"I found you by following the tracks of your blood," he said.

"Lead me back to our troops," I asked.

"You're not in a condition to walk very far. No—you couldn't even crawl there if you wanted to. Our village was burned down by the Germans." That was probably the fire I had seen some time ago.

"We want to pay them back," the old peasant continued fiercely. "There are six of us—two old men, a woman and three lads. We need a commander and instructor. We want to get hold of a machine-gun but we don't know how to handle it. Stay with us and lead us."

At first I thought that I might stay with them for a while and train them while I was getting my strength back. Afterwards I could find my way back to my unit.

When the old man and I reached a forest glade where the guerillas were hiding there proved to be eight of them, not six as he had said. On the following day their number rose to eleven.

The woman in the group bound up my wounds. At night we were brought milk and eggs from a neighbouring village. In the daytime I set to work to train the detachment.

We began operations by attacking three Germans who were spending the night in a lonely out of the way farm. Until then we had only two rifles which had been picked up by peasants in a field. Now we had three more and also some hand-grenades.

A week later we got hold of a machine-gun. A few days after that we held up an enemy motor lorry which turned out to be full of explosives. These we used to blow up two bridges.

Every day I made up my mind to leave the detachment and cross the front lines. But there was always some new job to be done, some new operation to be carried out. New guerilla recruits would join us and require training. Special information would be received—requiring immediate attention. . . .

By the end of September I realised that I would never leave the detachment. About that time we received information of such importance that it had to be conveyed to the Red Army Command right away. I sent one of my men—and only after he had gone did it occur to me that I might have gone myself!

Within three months my detachment had grown to 120 strong. Official war communiqués began to mention bridges blown up by "a guerilla detachment commanded by Comrade O." . . . enemy aircraft burned . . . motor lorries captured. . . .

I established permanent contact with Red Army headquarters. In the course of our work we managed to lay our hands on a number of important secret documents of the German Command and these were very useful to our people.

A price was eventually put on my head by the Germans. But that did not worry any of us very much.

One day it so happened that I found myself back among Red Army men. I received a summons from headquarters to appear in person.

When I went over they showed me into the general's dugout. He rose and shook hands. When our official business was over he asked me in a friendly tone:

"What were you before the war?"

"A draughtsman," I replied. "I was preparing to enter the School of Architecture."

There was a pause while he thought over that.

"May I return to my detachment now?" I asked.

"Why—don't you want to stay with us? You're a Red Army man after all. I'll give you a long leave and after that appoint you on my staff."

This was a difficult decision to make. It was true, as he said, that I was a Red Army man after all. Nevertheless . . .

"Comrade general," I said. "You'll understand . . . my job is over there with our guerillas."

He shook me by the hand and we parted.

THE FIRST RECONNAISSANCE

By Nikolai Moskvín

I WAS RECENTLY THE GUEST OF A CRACK GUERRILLA DETACHMENT FAMOUS FOR its daring operations against Nazi garrisons in occupied Soviet territory. I set myself to find out how this guerilla column was first formed, whose idea it was, who began it.

All the strings led me to two old men, Vassily Drozdov and Pavel Levashov. They have now handed over the command to younger men and are content to serve as watchmen.

On that memorable night when the Panzers swept east, old Pavel Levashov and the Drozdovs were the last to flee from their village. The Drozdovs stayed in their cottage. Pavel left with the rest, but couldn't keep up. He lagged behind on the footpath to the woods.

His heart wasn't what it used to be. It pumped away so hard that he had to stop. He looked around cautiously, saw that he wasn't being chased, and sat down thankfully on the grass. The footsteps of his fellow villagers died away in the distance. He rubbed his left side under his shirt, trying to quieten his palpitating heart.

Across the twilit fields he saw Drozdov's cottage beginning to burn. "Ah well, never mind," he said to himself. "The house has seen its best days."

The leading German tank had halted near Drozdov's door. Fenya Drozdova, wearing a coloured dress, ran out to see what the noise was about. The tank hatch opened. A man with a red, perspiring face poked his head out and asked something in a hoarse voice.

Fenya rushed back into the cottage. The door had barely closed behind her when old Drozdov's double-barrelled gun fired at the tank from the open window of the front room. The tank turned its turret and spat fire at the cottage.

Drozdov and Fenya rushed out of the back door, down the garden path, and reached the woods by skirting the fields. As they ran, Fenya hissed reproachfully, "What in heaven's name were you up to, Granddad? Are you mad, shooting at a tank with duck shot?"

Drozdov protested, panting, "I wasn't firing at the tank, my love. I was firing at his ugly mug!"

"You have no sense, Granddad!" scolded Fenya.

From the village came loud, coarse voices howling and shouting. Levashov,

peering through the gathering dusk, thought the Nazis must be rampaging somewhere in the high street to the right, where the wine and spirit shop was.

"That'll keep them occupied," thought Levashov thankfully. "They're not thinking of us."

The darkness was falling. The fields around the village were empty, and the night drifted undisturbed over the forest.

Levashov's heart was nearly normal. He began to feel annoyed. "They're a fine lot," he remarked to himself, thinking of his fellow villagers who had gone ahead. "Leaving me all alone like this."

It was the thought of Drozdov that angered the old man most of all. Perhaps because Drozdov had looked so spry as he sprinted for the woods—and Drozdov was six years older than he.

Supporting himself on his arms, he got up. At that moment an agonising cry sounded from the village. It was a woman's voice. Levashov sat down again and listened. The cry was not repeated.

Away to the left he saw a fire break out. "That's my place," he whispered. The old man's face turned grey. So the peaceful ways of the past were over. A new, restless, cruel time had begun.

He heard steps behind him and dropped flat in the grass. Against the background of the dark sky he saw a broad, thick-set man with a rifle slung across his back. The man was moving carefully, looking left and right as he went. Levashov recognised old Drozdov.

"Vassily," he called softly, and rose from the grass.

Drozdov peered at him closely.

"What are you sitting here for, you old devil?" he said, squatting down. "I've been looking for you everywhere. We thought they must have got you."

"Couldn't you find anybody younger to look for me?" grumbled Levashov, feeling awkward, wanting to insult his old friend, yet grateful to him for coming.

"What do you mean by that, you old good-for-nothing? At night, let me tell you, I'm the best of the lot."

Drozdov sat down on the grass and began boasting about the nights he'd spent out of doors sitting and waiting at the decoys set for wolves. Levashov couldn't contain himself, and began bullying Drozdov for his foolishness in tackling the tank with duck shot.

"I fired with what I had in my hand," answered Drozdov defensively. "But that's of no importance."

It seemed that his fellow villagers had sent Drozdov not only to find Levashov, but also to discover how many Germans there were in the village.

Not that they had any plan. It was a hazy, almost aimless desire. But that was how it all began. The old men set out on their first guerilla reconnaissance.

DAD

By the Commander of a Guerilla Detachment

I AM 49 YEARS OLD AND MY NAME IS PAUL ILYICH FOMICH, BUT IN THE GUERRILLA detachment I'm known as Batka (Dad). I'm commander of a guerilla unit in one of the districts of the Leningrad region. I also served in the army in the old days. I was awarded the Cross of St. George, 4th Degree, for dealing with a German sentry in the first world war, and for some other minor exploits.

In November, 1917, about 70 of us left the army and came to Moscow, where I lived during the days of the Revolution. I was wounded, and when I recovered I set off for my home in Ekaterinovskaya, in the Kuban region. This was at the end of 1917.

Various people visited the village. They went to the headmen and other big persons and called on us to join the "Volunteers' Army." But we veterans of the war weren't having any. Later someone else visited the village, but, unlike the others, he came to see us simple folk, not the local big-wigs.

He had several conversations with us. We told him how we had fought in the war and at the outbreak of the Revolution. When he came for the last time he said: "We're Bolsheviks. My name is Kirov; Sergey Mironovich they call me. I'd advise you to join the Bolshevik Party and set up Soviet power here. Would you like to?" he asked.

"Yes, we'd like to," we replied. "Well then," he said, "you ought to get together a guerilla detachment. Pick out a leader." They chose me.

We collected some weapons—four rifles and three swords. Sergey Mironovich came up to me and said: "Well, shake! And I hope that in about a month's time you'll have some good results to show. Defend your cause." And then he left.

Our detachment, formed in 1917, kept together right up to the middle of 1919. We roamed through the villages of the Kuban and Don regions harassing the White bandits and fighting for the Soviet power.

Years passed, and peaceful construction set in. I was employed in the army supplies department. I became chairman of the Revolutionary Committee in my own village, and then chairman of the District Executive Committee of the Soviets. Later, until 1932, I worked in the town of Kozlov as general business manager of the city hospital. Then I became ill and spent a long time in hospital.

On 22nd June last year, the day the war broke out, I visited the District Military Commissariat and asked that I be sent to the front. Some time passed, and still I had no call-up papers from the Commissariat. I was classed as a "1st-group invalid."

The Germans were within 60 miles of Kharkov. By then I had come to an arrangement with some acquaintances, Young Bolsheviks, and we decided to join the guerillas. There were 26 of us. I told the secretary of the District Committee of the Party about our decision and asked for his instructions.

We were given the task of ascertaining the situation of the enemy's positions, the movements of his troops and their attitude to the local population. The secretary added: "Of course you know perfectly well what else you have to do." "Certainly," I replied. "Raids, ambushes. We'll give them no peace."

I then got the detachment together and told them what we had to do. Their reply was brief and to the point. "We'll do the job. We'll be O.K. with old Dad here!" And since then I've always been "Dad" to them!

We parted from our families, crossed the front line, and travelled another two miles before we called a halt. "Take good note of the path and the locality. We'll have to send back reports," I told my comrades. I explained to them how we fought in the guerillas in '17 and '18 under Kirov. "We had nothing but our bare hands then, but we beat them all the same. This time we've got a rifle, hand-grenades and a light machine-gun." We marched on for another four or five miles. The night was falling.

I gave my instructions. "The forests are the home of the guerillas, boys, so make yourselves familiar. We'll have three camps. The first will be from

one and a half to two miles from the objective, the second about three-quarters of a mile, and the third will be on the steppe.

"If we are encircled in the first camp we make for the second, and from the second to the third. So we can always move, whatever the circumstances. We must have reserve camps so that we can keep our losses to the minimum."

With the help of the farmers and Pioneers (Soviet children's organisations) we got the information we wanted. We found the location of two long-range guns which were shelling Kh., as well as of a mortar battery and some cavalry. I sent reports to headquarters about this straight away. We penetrated into the enemy's rear for about 16 to 19 miles. Most of the detachment consisted of young people; the rest were incapacitated workers and clerks.

I split my men up so that there were between 30 and 50 feet between them and told them to follow the movements of the enemy troops. Several columns of tanks were on the move. We spent several hours on the spot and then made for our camps.

"Now we've placed them! What about a raid?" they asked me eagerly. "Come on, Dad, let's raid them. The sooner the better."

But I said: "First of all you've got to be acclimatised. Just the same as when you go to a health resort for treatment. At first the change of climate and air gives you headaches and you don't feel so good. But a few days later you become acclimatised, and you feel grand. The same applies here. Just now you observed the enemy's movements and saw his armaments. When you've got thoroughly used to everything, we'll lay an ambush."

The same day a young Bolshevik returned to camp, having taken the information to headquarters. He told us that Red Army units had confirmed our reports. Our men had opened artillery fire and destroyed all the firing points on which we had reported. We sent off another guerilla with the second report about enemy troop movements, the number of tanks and so on.

We had to find out the attitude of the Germans to the population. We soon did so. When the Germans occupied a village the first thing that happened was pillage and loot—livestock and poultry first, and then the plunder of the cottages. Those who resisted were shot on the spot.

I personally saw inhabitants shot and hanged. For two days the corpses of dead men hung from the gallows in the village of T. In the village of Z. the Germans announced that a reward would be paid to anyone bringing information about the guerillas. The population put us wise to all this. The little Pioneers were wonderful. They were continually on the lookout, bringing us valuable information.

In the village of B. the peasants shot a German officer. Six or seven hours later a punitive detachment arrived. They burned down ten cottages, shot the first persons they laid hands on, raped four women and took twelve women and girls with them. We saw all this with our own eyes. We sent in reports about German atrocities.

All the tasks entrusted to our guerilla detachment had now been carried out and we were almost thoroughly acclimatised. "Now we can try you on fighting operations, lads," I said. "We must have vengeance on the Germans for village B." "Come on, Dad!" they responded. "Let's get on with it."

We saw three cyclists on the road. I placed my men at distances of about 16 feet from one another and ordered them to open fire only when I gave the word. "The hand-grenades are to be flung by Misha, the best thrower." (We never called one another by our surnames, only by our Christian names.)

The cyclists approached closer. I opened fire first. One fell. The other two opened fire from automatic rifles.

I saw that two of my young Bolsheviks had fallen back slightly. Immediately I shouted out, "Misha and Pasha! Forward, attack!" and flung myself at the Germans. We killed the other two and took their automatics and cycles. This was our first ambush.

"Another ambush, lads, and we'll be completely acclimatised," I told them.

The scouts reported that a column of Germans was approaching along a road leading to our forest. I looked through the field-glasses. Quite right. Four motor-cyclists at the head of a number of foot-sloggers.

I spaced out my men along the road and ordered: "Each one can fling two grenades, but if there is no answering fire, use the rifles only."

When the Germans had got to within 70 feet I blew my whistle. The Germans shot off their machines but had no time to open fire. With shouts of "Attack! Hurrah!" we flung ourselves on the Nazis. Several were killed, the rest were flung back. We dragged the motor-cycles and automatic rifles into the woods.

"Now you've become completely, 100 per cent acclimatised," I told the guerillas. "Now we can make not ambushes, but real raids."

The opportunity soon presented itself. A note was brought by our scout: "Dad, make a raid and drive out the Germans. But keep losses to a minimum. Look after your lads like a real father and don't let them down." I needed no telling.

Several days passed. No Germans appeared. Then one day in the woods we heard the hum of motors, and decided to carry out our raid. We hid ourselves at the side of the road, just where the Germans would pass.

Two men armed with automatic rifles were placed on the flanks, and the machine-gunner was in the centre. I told the others when and how to fling their hand-grenades and fire-bottles. The detachment was split into two groups, the first in the charge of T., my second-in-command, and the other under P., a militia worker.

The men separated until there was about 30 feet between each. The hum of the motors grew louder. They came so close that the earth itself seemed to be roaring. One motor-cyclist was at the head. About 20 feet behind him were three more motor-cyclists, behind them was a whippet tank, and then another motor-cyclist followed by a tank, a whippet-tank and a big staff car. Then came a dozen or so infantry lorries and after them more motor-cyclists, and so on.

When the motor-cyclists had passed I shouted: "Fire at the Fascists."

Well, our lads began to do their stuff. Two machines at once burst into flames. Meanwhile others had come up. I gave the order: "Hand-grenades and machine-guns into action."

The staff car came up. I fired four shots. Misha sent his hand-grenades over and the staff car blew to bits in the air. The rear machines came up. Then we opened fire on them. The Germans started jumping off while the cars were still moving, but we used our automatics and machine-guns.

It grew dark. I saw that about 100 of them were getting ready to surround us, and rushed forward. The guerillas followed me and we started to smite the Nazis left and right. There was a terrible rumpus. It lasted about 40 minutes. Blazing machines were left lying on the road. The Germans retreated, but the roar continued. A second column was on the move.

I left one group on the spot, and ordered the other to go back about two

miles. Half an hour later the column had drawn up. We took them in a pincer movement from both flanks. After the first shots the Germans started shouting, and tried to escape, but my men's shots always found their mark. This time the fighting lasted for more than an hour. The Germans completely lost their heads. We created such disorder in their second column that they won't forget us in a hurry.

When it was all over we began to count our trophies—three machine-guns, two field-bags and documents, three motor-cycles, six burned-out machines, two burned-out tanks and the remains of two staff cars.

That was our first real battle.

"Plus and Minus"
PLUS AND MINUS

By E. Vilensky

WINTER NIGHTS ON THE SOUTHERN FRONT ARE FROSTY, DARK AND SILENT. THEY are good nights for guerilla fighting—if, like the Russians, you are warmly dressed and inured to the cold. But if, like the Rumanians, you have grown up under a southern sun and are none too well clad, you would certainly prefer to stay indoors in a tightly sealed warm room, leaving only a few sentries on duty outside.

On such a night Soviet guerillas, aided by a special detachment of General Kharitonov's troops, attacked a Rumanian mounted artillery regiment fifteen miles behind the front lines.

Ten guerillas had come from the village where the enemy regiment was stationed to ask the Red Army men for help. They explained that after dark the Rumanian soldiers stayed indoors. The guerillas wanted to tackle the Rumanians, blow up their guns and seize their documents, but it was too big a job for ten men.

Ninety Red Army men volunteered to help the guerillas. They were junior commanders, political instructors and men of the rank and file, including a few who had never been in action before.

The operation was planned to the smallest detail. The combined detachment of Red Army men and guerillas armed themselves with two mortars, three machine-guns, eight sub-machine-guns, seventeen tommy-guns, two dozen semi-automatic rifles and plenty of hand-grenades and revolvers.

Each member of the detachment had a definite assignment. At dark they set out. The night was so black that a man couldn't see the muzzle of his own rifle.

The villages lying to the left and right along the road were in enemy hands. The detachment avoided them, stealing unnoticed into the rear of the enemy. A collective farmer who knew every path and hillock marched at the head of the column with one Red Army man. The vanguard of six men and the commander followed close behind. On their heels, guided by the sound of their marching feet, came the rest of the detachment.

When they arrived at the outskirts of the village the guerillas pointed out the best positions for the mortars. They showed the Red Army men where the six Rumanian sentries were stationed near a hayrick, and where the enemy guns were situated.

Then, when telephone wires had been cut and the six sentries noiselessly dispatched, the mortars opened fire.

Uskov gave the command. "Forward! First battalion to the left, second to the right! Third battalion, follow me!" The charge against the enemy gun positions began.

The silent village was suddenly alight with the flash of explosions. Indistinct figures flitted agitatedly about in the lurid glare.

It seemed incredible that a battle could be fought in that pitch darkness, where friend could not be distinguished from foe. But our men seemed to know their way about.

"Plus!" shouted each Red Army man as he ran into anybody moving through the village streets.

If the reply came "Minus!" he knew that the man hidden in the darkness was a friend. If no response came, he was an enemy to be immediately destroyed.

Going from house to house, the Red Army men drove out the Rumanians quartered there, dispatching them with hand-grenades. Lieutenant Goncharuk with a group of Red Army men captured four guns, wiping out two dozen Rumanian artillerymen in their dug-outs. As the guns could not be hauled back to the Soviet lines, the locks and barrels were destroyed. Enemy machine-guns were silenced with hand-grenades.

The Rumanians hid wherever they could, in cellars, dug-outs, lofts and haystacks, but they were smoked out by the Red Army men, with the enthusiastic co-operation of the villagers.

A stone monument to Lenin once stood in the main street of the village. When the Fascists invaded the place they smashed it to pieces. The Red Army men found the fragments still lying on the ground.

Near the ruined monument Sergeant Paul Vertikhvost, leading six Soviet auto-riflemen, met a group of Rumanians. "For Lenin, comrades!" he shouted, and in a few minutes the desecrated monument was avenged.

The detachment was running up an impressive score. Shmiley's automatic rifle platoon had killed 21 Rumanians and captured seven. Goncharuk's platoon had finished off 60 and taken another seven prisoners. Red Army man Rulan had captured a gun crew.

Towards the end of the battle the Rumanians caught on to the Red Army men's code and decided to test the magic formula. When they heard the Red auto-riflemen approaching they began to shout "Plus minus! Plus minus!"

"Oh, is that so?" remarked the riflemen grimly. "Well, here's for plus," they said as they fired one round, "and here's for minus," as they fired a second. "That'll make the arithmetic complete!"

Towards daybreak peasants reported a suspicious noise near a neighbouring village. Enemy reinforcements were on the move. The commander decided to withdraw. The guerillas remained in the village with their haul of captured rifles, hand-grenades and machine-guns. The Red Army men gathered at the agreed rendezvous and proceeded back to the Soviet lines.

As he marched along, Lieutenant Goncharuk took out his little notebook and started to jot down some figures. "What are you doing?" asked the commander curiously.

"Just a little bit of arithmetic, comrade commander," replied Goncharuk. "We're minus three wounded, but we're plus two sub-machine-guns, 27 prisoners, six horses and a heap of rifles, revolvers and documents. And we knocked out five guns and over a hundred Rumanians."

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"We seem to have a handsome credit balance!" laughed the commander.

They swung along the road towards the Red Army lines. Winter nights are dark on the southern front, but not too dark for Soviet eyes.

WHAT IS FAME?

By Konstantin Finn

VYAZMA WAS ONCE KNOWN FOR ITS HONEYCAKES. THEY WERE MADE FROM a special sort of dough and tasted very good. You could keep them for a long time, and they didn't get stale. Those cakes sold throughout Russia, and built up quite a reputation for that small town in the district of Smolensk.

When the Germans have been driven out of our country, wonderful honeycakes will again be baked in Vyazma—a more illustrious Vyazma, shining among other towns and villages, some hitherto unknown, on Russia's new map of fame.

On that map, too, will be the village of Babino. Nobody had ever heard of Babino before the war. It had no reputation for honeycakes or gingerbread or kvass. Vyazma honeycakes were mentioned in encyclopædias, but there was nothing to distinguish Babino from thousands of other Russian villages.

There is a big marsh on its outskirts—one of those marshes which even the persistent toil of Russian peasants could not drain. Two streets and several dozen houses make up the whole village.

Not long ago I was driving along a road which snowdrifts had made almost impassable. At last I had to stop, unable to proceed further. A few minutes later a collective farmer, about forty years of age, came over and looked pityingly at the stranded car.

The war and its horrors, the sight of killed and mutilated people and the roaring of guns have not lessened the courtesy of our country people. Passers-by stop, just as they always did, to help haul a vehicle or horse out of the mud or snowdrifts.

The farmer told me he was from Babino. I heard him with indifference. Babino meant nothing to me.

"Haven't you heard of Babino?" the farmer asked indignantly.

I had to admit my ignorance.

Then he told me the following story.

Two car-loads of German officers came to Babino. The Nazis asked to be directed to a certain road, and were shown the way. But the road was mined and one of the cars was blown up. The car which escaped returned to Babino, where the German officers vented their spite on the villagers.

They demanded the surrender of those who knew that the road had been mined. All the people of the village were driven into the marsh, where they were forced to stand for hours in the ice-cold water.

In order to save the others, one old man took the blame on himself. He was led away by the Germans. The village was burned to the ground.

"Did the old man say anything when he was being taken away?" I asked.

"He said 'Goodbye,' and made a low bow to the people," said the farmer.

"And what did the people say?"

"They all made a low bow to the old man and thanked him. They all cried, especially the kids. They liked the old man. After the war, when we've destroyed the Germans, we'll build a monument to our Ivan Dmitrievich."

Before the war, if you were asked where you came from and said "From

Vyazma," everyone thought of honeycakes. That was reputation, but it was not fame.

In time to come the answer "I am from Babino" will conjure up a picture of men, women and children standing in ice-cold water, and among them old man Ivan Dmitrievich, with his love for the people and his heart of a lion. That is more than reputation. It is fame.

The road was cleared and my car could proceed. The farmer from Babino went on his way. It is war time, and danger lurks everywhere. Beyond the turn of the road my farmer friend may have been hit by a bullet or shell splinter. Who knows?

But the fame of Ivan Dmitrievich, the old man of the village of Babino, will go on for ever. There will always be someone to tell his story, and someone to hear. That is fame.

HITLER COMES TO TOLSTOY'S HOME

The Diary of Maria Shchegoleva

Note: Maria Shchegoleva was for many years a member of the museum staff that administered Leo Tolstoy's estate in Yasnaya Polyana—the village two miles from Tula where the great Russian writer was born and lived almost all his life. Shchegoleva was closely connected with the Tolstoy family.

Yasnaya Polyana was on the route of the German offensive against Moscow. When the Germans approached the village Shchegoleva did not abandon her post. She decided to stay in the house and save what she could. For 30 days this courageous woman remained among the Nazis trying to stop the destruction of the estate. She failed, but in one respect she succeeded.

Day by day she watched the Germans and came in regular contact with their officers and men. All the time she kept a secret diary. This diary, in which she scrupulously entered her impressions, was saved. It is a document of unusual force, a piece of history which will remain as evidence when the last Hitlerite is dead.

27TH OCTOBER: The Germans are closing in on Yasnaya Polyana. The farmers in the village are digging bomb shelters near their houses. The mothers of small children are particularly anxious. We are converting the basement under one of the museum buildings into a bomb shelter. The news came this evening that the Germans were 12 miles from Yasnaya. Terrible news. . . .

28TH OCTOBER: All is calm here. Everything is quiet in the air, and no aircraft appeared here all day. One cannot help thinking that this is the lull before the storm.

29TH OCTOBER: A clear, crisp morning, good weather for flying. Air attacks began early in the morning with machine-gun fire and the distant explosion of bombs. The women and children, with their belongings, have been transferred to the bomb shelter in the cellar of the museum building. German planes appeared over the village and over the estate, opening heavy machine-gun fire. Bombs exploded somewhere nearby. Two dropped in the village and killed Orekhov, the chairman of our collective farm, near his house.

The real air attack, however, began at 20 minutes past midday, when heavy machine-gun fire was concentrated on the Volkonsky house (one of the museum

buildings). German planes fly over the village almost touching the roofs. The battle is being fought some distance from the estate, and the Red Army troops try to skirt Yasnaya Polyana as they retire.

The bomb shelter under the museum is filled with crying children and groaning women. They listen to the boom of the cannon and to the crash of glass from the windows. Things are happening with lightning speed, and by 2 p.m. we learn from little Sonya Tolstoy, who runs in breathless from the village, that German tanks are moving up the road.

Collective farmers have picked up the bodies of some 20 killed Red Army men in and around the village. Two wounded men are hidden in the houses.

30TH OCTOBER: The first German car entered the gates of the estate this morning. Three officers alighted. They were doctors, and one of them, Doctor Schwartz, speaking faultless Russian without the slightest trace of an accent, said they were looking for premises for a dressing-station. They examined the museum and wrote in the visitors' book "The first three Germans in the campaign against Russia."

We tried our hardest to keep the museum intact. The Germans seemed very polite and accommodating and promised to help us in this. One of them scrawled in red pencil "Entrance forbidden—the house of Tolstoy, the greatest Russian writer," on a sheet of writing-paper. Perhaps, after all, we will manage to save the house.

That evening 20 Germans appeared and took possession of the museum, office, dining-room and kitchen in the central part of the Volkonsky house. Their officer was demanding something, but none of us knew enough German to understand. I tried speaking French, and learned that he very insistently demanded chickens, and that I must immediately clear out of my rooms. His tone was extremely unpleasant.

I removed my belongings and gave up my room. One of the officers snatched up an old copy of *Izvestia* lying on my writing-table and, pointing to the pictures of members of the Soviet Government, hissed "Jude" (Jew). In no uncertain gestures he pointed to the door. I had no choice but to leave.

Just outside the Volkonsky house I watched an interesting sight. German soldiers were trying to catch chickens for their officers' supper. The chickens were too quick for them and set up a frightful screech as they flew about. The women to whom these chickens belonged stood quietly on the steps, and one of them remarked: "My, what cultured Europeans!"

31ST OCTOBER: Only yesterday the notice written by a German officer forbidding entrance was posted outside the house, but this morning it became clear that it would be of no avail. I was chosen because I speak French.

The Germans demanded that everything be removed from the literary museum to the other building, because they were opening a dressing-station there.

We had little time, and removed the things without much order. The show-cases, sculptures and Tolstoy's sofa were all stacked in the hall. While we were thus engaged a new order came to clear the scientists' room and the room of Tolstoy's son, Sergei.

I was astonished when I opened Sergei's room. One of the officers went over to the chest of drawers containing Tolstoy's linen, opened it and began removing the contents. These men were extremely rough, and all our appeals that these were the personal belongings of Tolstoy's eldest son were, of course, futile and "out of place."

The school building was taken over by the German headquarters, and that

evening a group of German aristocratic officers came to the museum. They spoke French much better than the German doctors, and my own knowledge of French enabled me to form a good idea of this "upper" stratum of present-day Germany.

Their interest in Tolstoy was very superficial. They were far more interested in the intrinsic value of the estate, and made no effort to conceal their hatred for everything Soviet and Russian. When told that the museum belonged to the Academy of Sciences they laughed. One insolent youngster remarked with a sarcastic smile, "What, science among the Bolsheviks?"

I spoke of our splendid school in Yasnaya Polyana, and they were surprised that the children of the peasants were taught there. They referred to them only as "*petites bêtes*." They inquired about Tolstoy's sons, daughters and grandchildren. I told them that they all received pensions from the Government. They said they were sorry for Tolstoy's family, since aristocrats are not in favour in the Soviet Union.

Two or three other members of the museum staff joined me on the verandah where this conversation took place. The officers left us, and quite unexpectedly began singing "God Save the Tsar"—apparently just to spite us.

1ST NOVEMBER: At about 2 p.m. a German soldier came running to my room to ask me to open the Museum and show it to an "important general." I snatched up the keys and made for the entrance.

From a distance I could see that the general was indeed "important." Doctors from the dressing station and officers from headquarters were running to meet him. The scene in front of the Museum recalled an episode in a ballet. Officers were bowing, clicking their heels and saluting all in one. And when "der grosse General" decided to make a move, everyone made way.

It seems that I did not succeed in being sufficiently diplomatic and respectful. Der Grosse was very impatient and simply ran through the Museum, without apparently attaching much importance to the exhibits. He seemed mainly interested in whether the building could be adapted for military use, and least of all in the cultural treasures it contained.

One of the officers from the General's suite returned when his superior had left, and asked to be shown round in more detail. When he saw the rare photographs of Tolstoy at work and Tolstoy with his physician Makovetsky he simply put them in his pocket, despite the Curator's strong protests. We were told that they were required as material for Berlin journals.

The officers were eager to find out where the Museum's most precious books, paintings and other exhibits had been evacuated. On hearing that everything of value had been sent to Siberia they said: "Yes, of course, the Communists will sell all those things to the Americans." Evidently they were judging by their own standards.

Later I found that this "grosse General" was no less a person than Guderian himself.

2ND NOVEMBER: Doctor Schwartz offered his services in helping to preserve the Museum exhibits and told us to remove all materials belonging to the Literary Museum from his dressing station. When I went there I was surprised at the number of wounded. We worked from early morning, together with several other members of the staff, to remove the pictures and photographs from the Literary Museum and carried them to the main Museum building, where now all is chaos.

It was a difficult matter to remove the exhibits from the Literary Museum, since the floors in the upper storey were covered with wounded lying on loose

hay. There were several serious cases. Near the pictures illustrating "War and Peace" was a German with a ghastly pale face. He was groaning terribly, and apparently was breathing his last.

The Germans set up their field kitchens in the courtyard separating the Literary Museum from the main building. All the fences and park benches were used for firewood.

3RD NOVEMBER: This morning I received orders to vacate the second floor of the main Museum building. All the furniture from the drawing-room and the typists' room—which is even now called the Remington Room—was transferred to the hall.

The Germans' "Betreten Verboten" (Entrance Forbidden) sign posted up on the first day is not worth the paper it is written on. Our only consolation is that now we will not have to show Tolstoy's house to the German officers. When we had finished moving the furniture and had locked the door leading to the staircase, one German officer said to me: "You will be held responsible for the good maintenance of the Museum." What an insult! It was difficult to bear.

The boom of cannon could be heard from the direction of Tula.

6TH NOVEMBER: I was again called to the Museum early in the morning, this time to show some visitors round Tolstoy's home, half of which had already been converted into officers' quarters. German officers demanded that I show them Tolstoy's belongings, which were stacked in disorder in the hall.

I noticed two Whiteguard émigrés among the group of visitors. One was Prince Demidov and the other Prince Svyatopolk-Mirsky. The latter is the son of the Svyatopolk-Mirsky who was Minister of the Interior under the Tsar, and whom at the beginning of this century Tolstoy petitioned on behalf of Maxim Gorky, then imprisoned in Nizhni-Novgorod jail.

Mirsky bragged that his family was at one time Liberal. But this specimen certainly was not. He was doing his utmost to pipe to the Germans' tune and repeat their leit-motif: "Kill the Jews."

In pointing to the piano I spoke about Professor Goldenweiser, who for seventeen years was a close friend of the Tolstoy family, and often visited Yasnaya Polyana to play for Tolstoy. Svyatopolk-Mirsky cut me short. "Goldenweiser is a Jew, we will make short shrift of him." (Alexander Goldenweiser is a distinguished professor at the Moscow Conservatoire and one of the Soviet Union's best-known pianists.—ED.)

Mirsky happened to notice Tolstoy's samovar. Picking it up he smilingly said that he had long wanted to possess a Tula samovar and was therefore going to take this one. He repeated this "joke" as he appropriated many other things.

7TH NOVEMBER: A cold, grey day. No aircraft appeared. Between 11 and 4, at regular intervals of from ten to twelve minutes, German heavy artillery fires on Tula from Yasnaya Polyana. The German guns stand near the kindergarten building. Tula is holding out, and Doctor Schwartz told me quite candidly that its stiff resistance came as a surprise to the Germans. Many wounded Germans were brought into the dressing station.

8TH NOVEMBER: Markina, a charwoman who has been working here for 20 years, brought the news that the Germans wanted the first floor opened. "They say that there is no more room for the wounded," she told us. One of my colleagues went to the Museum, to find all the locks broken, but no wounded. Perfectly healthy German soldiers were pushing their way in.

They immediately settled down for the night in all the rooms, except one in which we had stored some exhibits.

I could not sleep that night. I was haunted by the terrible thought that the treasures of Russian culture were being trampled on by Germans and would be destroyed.

9TH NOVEMBER: This morning we were all called out for the final liquidation of the main museum building. We were allowed only the hall in which to store the museum property. We filled up the hall; part of the museum property, which the Germans said "would not spoil," was stacked on the verandah. We knew that it was useless to protest.

The sofa on which Tolstoy was born stood in the hall. It is one of our museum's greatest treasures; it was brought here a few days ago from the basement of the other building, where we had hoped to preserve it from burning. One German doctor ordered the soldiers to carry the sofa to the room which he had chosen as his quarters. I protested vehemently, repeating in French "Leo Tolstoy was born on this sofa," and ordered our employees to carry it into the hall.

The Germans tugged at one end, and our men at the other. By sheer luck some officers came in who had already seen the Museum. I told them what was happening and one of them spoke to the doctor, who disappeared with an embarrassed look. Slightly damaged by the tug of war, the sofa was carried off in triumph by our watchmen.

We all despair of preserving even the building, let alone the valuable things in it. Everything seems to suggest that Leo Tolstoy's estate will be ruined beyond repair. The Germans have announced that henceforth the estate will be considered merely the property of Count Tolstoy, to whom they intend to turn it over.

10TH-13TH NOVEMBER: All quiet on the Yasnaya Polyana front. Firing of long-range guns can be heard only at rare intervals. Evidently the Germans are shelling Tula. As soon as the sky clears, our planes appear overhead and are fired on by huge German A.A. guns mounted near the school building.

14TH NOVEMBER: All last night and all to-day the Germans have been shelling Tula with heavy guns. Where is their battery located? No one knows, but it must be somewhere near the estate, for we can hear the hissing of the shells and our window panes shake. All the Russians here feel this very keenly.

In the evening we heard terrible news. Two men, one of them Vlasov, a young local peasant, and an unknown refugee who fled to our village, were hanged near the Post Office on orders from German headquarters. It appears that somebody had damaged a German motor-car with a hand-grenade near Vlasov's house.

The Germans took two human lives for one motor-car. They also posted up an announcement that any repetition would mean death for four people. The human mind cannot grasp nor can the heart understand what these European murderers are doing. I remember Tolstoy's famous appeal: "I cannot remain silent."

We feel powerless to fight for the preservation of the museum property. In one of the lower rooms we saw a table from the Tolstoy dining-room broken up and burned in the stove. We appealed to the soldiers and asked them not to burn the furniture, but they said they had permission from their superiors.

The museum on which we lavished so much care is practically wrecked. All the flower beds around the building, the hedges and fences are broken and

trampled by motor-cars and tanks which are brought here every once in a while for repairs. The filth everywhere is appalling. The bodies of hanged men are still up, evidently as a lesson to the local populace.

The doctors and officers who were so polite at first now look on Russians with ill-concealed hostility. Apparently they didn't count on such a long stay at the Tula approaches. At first they smiled and said they were only here *für kurze Zeit* (for a short time), but to-day is their nineteenth day in Yasnaya Polyana.

Soldiers passing through the estate often linger to look at the exhibits. A group stopped to look at a picture of Gorky and Tolstoy. I explained that Gorky visited Tolstoy at Yasnaya Polyana, and that the photograph was taken here. I asked them if Gorky's books were banned in Germany and they told me that they were. An officer who happened to pass shouted to me: "Now, you just stop telling them your stories." These officers are certainly nervous.

18TH NOVEMBER: The war is becoming part of our everyday life, and the drone of engines and the boom of cannon are now customary noises.

19TH-20TH NOVEMBER: No shots and no explosions. Wilhelm, the German chauffeur, said that Tula was encircled and that the Germans were not going to take it by storm. "When the Russian soldiers have nothing to eat they will come out and surrender on their own, and we shall have no losses," he explained triumphantly.

There are rumours that the Germans hanged fourteen people in Shchekino. It seems that every inhabited point must have its quota of hanged. Such is the will of the "victors."

The local teachers and the museum personnel don't know what their position is. The Germans took over the school-house and are burning the desks and books in the stoves. One teacher tried to protest, but he was told: "You are not going to have any more schools." The Germans take the same attitude towards the museum. We were told there would no longer be a museum but simply the estate of the Tolstoy family.

We tried to get some bread. Some time ago we submitted a list of the museum personnel and teachers to Prince Demidov, but he refuses to speak to us and there is no news about bread. All of us live on potatoes and are much worse off for it. This is our fourth week without bread. Sometimes we get a tiny piece as a gift from Germans billeted here. Of the four Germans in our house, only Wilhelm sometimes divides his rations with us.

The peasants are slightly better off, for most of them have provisions stored away. Prince Demidov tries his best to make friends with them, for after all, for him these are the future bread-producers of Great Germany. We are still not certain what Prince Demidov's position is. Some say he has been appointed Commandant of Tula and is only waiting for the city to be taken. But he seems to have a free hand at Yasnaya Polyana as well.

22ND NOVEMBER: The Germans show more "concern" for the museum. A French-speaking officer visited us to-day and ordered all valuable property to be stored in the hall and cellar, as he was authorised to seal up museum property. We were given two hours to do this, but I told him we could not manage it, as our workers lived in the village. However, the officer was in a hurry and posted up a small bill on the door leading to the hall, reading: "Private. High Command of Armed Forces."

He insisted on knowing how many things had disappeared, but I avoided giving direct answers.

23RD NOVEMBER: There are rumours that the Germans stationed here will

move further east to-morrow, and we are to accommodate either a hospital or an infantry unit. This is bad news, as we have been told that the infantry are much worse than this ambulance detachment.

Our watchmen have proved splendid. It is almost a month now since they received their last pay, but they stick to their jobs as devotedly as ever.

25TH NOVEMBER: One of our employees ran into my room early this morning, waking me with shouts of "What shall we do? They're removing all the museum property. I keep on repeating 'museum' in German but they won't listen."

A large covered lorry was standing in front of the main museum building. I asked the soldiers not to touch the museum property, but they only laughed and some began to shout. Although I couldn't make out their words, I could understand that they were telling me to mind my own business.

I made my way into the building, intending to speak to the officers and ask them not to remove our things, but in the hallway I met a group of soldiers with rifles. They welcomed me with a volley of curses and one of them cried, *Hinaus!* (Get out!)

At 10 a.m., when all the Germans had left and taken the valuables with them, I went along with the watchmen to remove whatever remained.

We were dumfounded. The museum had been converted into a stable! The floor was covered with hay and torn papers; the rooms were littered with bits of bread, discarded boots and other rubbish. Five volumes of world geography which stood in the bookcase had been cut with a razor—they had taken out the colour-plates. The door leading from Tolstoy's study to the balcony was open, and I went out. It was a terrible sight—evidently the Germans had not cared to use the toilet in the house.

We removed all the museum furniture that was left, and noticed that the locks on the writing-table had been broken. One door leading from the hall was still sealed and bore the sign posted up by a German officer on the 22nd. The other door was blocked by furniture from the inside, so we were sure that everything collected in the hall was safe.

We decided to try the second door, and much to our horror found it had been forced open and that many things had disappeared. The first notice put up by the Germans for the "protection" of the museum we found lying on the floor in one of the rooms, torn by a soldier's boot. So much for their "concern" for our treasures. We left it where it lay.

There will soon be nothing left of our museum.

26TH NOVEMBER: Carried my stock of potatoes from the basement to this room. We must save our only food.

These German *Kulturträger* (pioneers of culture) have now taken to searching private cellars and homes. They walked into Grishin's house last night and took away his lamp, still burning, from the table. When he protested, they pointed a revolver at him. They came again this morning and took his sugar bowl, bread and plate of pickles from the table and demanded flour from Litvinova, who hasn't enough to feed her three children. They also wanted to know where her wedding ring was.

In the evening, some of us decided to visit Tolstoy's grave. I hadn't been there since I heard that the Germans were burying their dead near it. The grave was surrounded by many white birch crosses, and only a tiny strip separated this cemetery from Tolstoy's grave. Altogether I counted 75 graves arranged with true German precision. What a savage and terrible combination.

Around midnight I was awakened by cannon fire. I went out and heard the cannon from the Tula direction. Fires could be seen there.

This morning I was summoned to the Military Museum. A new set of doctors had arrived and were organising their dressing station. They ordered us to clean up the filth left by the last dressing station.

In one room we found a wounded woman with a yellow haggard face, lying half-conscious on a stretcher. All we could learn from her was that her name was Natalya; later we found that she had been brought here from the village three days ago and that the doctors had been asked to bandage her wounds. They just threw her on a stretcher and left her without food or water. We brought her milk and food but had no bandage.

1ST-2ND DECEMBER: Artillery fire is as loud as ever. It is a grim, heart-rending music to our suffering people. The Germans become more insolent, particularly in the village.

Three women in Yasnaya Polyana have been raped. A German officer came to demand bed, mattress and pillows. I told him we had none—indeed, my own bed, pillow and blanket had been taken by the Germans. He walked into the other room and removed the last mattress from the bed. Then he went further and picked up the blankets and pillows.

Electric lights are on in the Literary Museum and sentinels posted all around. I was told that the building was being reserved for a General who is to pay a visit. No one has yet been installed in Volkonsky's house. This looks suspicious—perhaps we shall be driven out as the village schoolteachers were.

I would willingly go anywhere to avoid those greyish green uniforms, but there is nowhere to go. Food is unobtainable here, but still we have enough potatoes to keep us from starving. We procured 12 pounds of rye and, after milling it at home, mixed it with potatoes and baked it. The result distinctly resembled bread.

The German general who was to stay in the museum has evidently not arrived. Everything seems to be unexpected, from what I can see. Their plans have gone wrong somewhere, although they avoid the subject. This morning I decided to approach the officer waiting at the museum, but he had gone.

5TH DECEMBER: Fresh German units have arrived and this means new ordeals for the population. The newcomers are much more brazen. Yegorov was stopped in the street and his felt boots were taken away. They broke into Konyaeva's house and took away every bit of cloth. Our old schoolmaster, Preobrazhensky, also had his felt boots taken.

These are but a few of many similar incidents. "They are savages," our music-teacher told me to-day. Together with her old sister and mother she occupies a tiny cottage at the far end of the village.

"This morning two Germans dashed into our house and demanded bread," she told me in a disgusted voice. "We had none, and offered them cold boiled potatoes, which they bolted down. Making for the hot oven, they took out half-boiled potatoes and ate them. Then another savage appeared, took two chairs and vanished. Soon there were two Germans sleeping in our room, both of them dirty and scratching all night long."

Complaints come from all sides. In one house they took away all food-stuffs; elsewhere they stole the last stitch of clothing from an old woman, and so on.

Soon the Sonderfuehrer (commander of special detachments) will be staying with his staff at the main museum building. He is apparently quite a curious

individual—Russian, a typical Whiteguard emigré. The German won't tell us who he is, but evidently he comes from an aristocratic family. This type is worse than the Germans. They are afraid of being suspected of Russian sympathies and are particularly brutal.

When a colleague began complaining in his presence that German soldiers had burned the doors of one of Tolstoy's cupboards, he shouted "Hold your tongue!"

10TH DECEMBER: Several of our Russians are being kept under lock and key in a building under the Water Tower. Two women were waiting near the museum for the Sonderfuehrer, terribly upset. They told me that their husbands, who were on their way from Yasnaya Polyana Station to the village, had been arrested by the Germans. I went with them, and as we passed the Water Tower their husbands shouted to them.

The German sentries were furious, and I tried to calm them with my broken German. I was not successful and we were driven off, but my companions were bent on seeing the Sonderfuehrer, for now they knew where their husbands were and that they were alive.

11TH DECEMBER: No satisfaction from the Sonderfuehrer. Events are taking a different turn, and the Germans have no time to bother about the museum. There is news that our units have broken through from Tula and that the Germans are about to retreat, explaining this by "strategic" considerations.

It appears they want to draw the Russian forces out of Tula and then annihilate them. A very strange explanation, to be sure.

12TH DECEMBER: Almost no Germans remain here to-night. We took advantage of this to saw some firewood; we couldn't do so before, or the Germans would have taken the saw. While we were sawing, the German batteries stationed beyond the village were sending shell after shell against Tula and the heavy artillery gave us no sleep all night. Windows shook with the boom of cannon fire.

Eight fir trees have been broken in our famous "prospect" in the park. The weather is bad—blizzard, wind and thaw all in one. It is now absolutely clear that the Germans are retreating—if only they would be driven farther and farther away.

We are virtually under arrest, and for two days have not even been allowed to go to the well for water. Yesterday the Germans brought the bodies of their dead here.

14TH DECEMBER: This morning I went to the pond for water, and was surprised to hear a whistling noise overhead. It was followed by an explosion. Shells were flying over the estate.

Only a few Germans remain. In the village the last of them are taking away all the pigs, sheep and cows. They took one cow out of four belonging to the museum. The others had been hidden away in good time. The car still stands in front of the Literary Museum.

The whistling of shells is everywhere, and apparently the fighting is not very far off. At about 9 or 10 a.m. I saw columns of smoke rising from the forester's house and the hospital. The smoke clouds grew menacingly, and it was not long before we heard that the retreating Germans had set fire to the forester's house, hospital and rest-home. The whole village is in a panic, afraid that the Germans will burn everything. People are preparing to abandon their houses. A fire has broken out in the huge Tolstoy school.

Everybody is excited, and we are all afraid that the Germans will set fire to

the museum. With shells whistling around me I ran to the Tolstoy house, where only a few Germans remain, looking for our charwoman, Markina. Together we tried to make our way into the house. A German N.C.O. met us and tried to drive us off, but we don't have to obey their orders any more.

I summoned all the museum workers and we set about extinguishing the fire, which was already visible through the windows. We were greatly helped by the younger members of the staff, Komarovsky, Dr. Ilyushin and Claudia Litvinova, who broke into the house and shouted that so far only three rooms were ablaze, and the house would be saved.

We had neither fire-fighting apparatus nor water, for the Germans had destroyed the well. We used snow until someone ran to the old well and found it was intact. This made things much easier and we worked until dark, battling against the flames. By evening we saw that the house had been saved. Of course, everything was damaged, but that did not matter now; the Germans had retreated and we could restore things.

15TH DECEMBER (morning): The first Red Army men were surrounded by an eager crowd. We told them our experiences and asked for fresh news. We got it—and it is wonderful! The Germans are being driven back along the whole front.

ON PATROL

By Yevgeniya Levakovskaya

THE WAVES SEETHED AMONG THE STONES OF THE BALTIC SHORE, THEN SLOWLY receded. The wet boulders glistened like seals. A storm was brewing. The slate-coloured sky hung low over the leaden, heaving sea. Here and there the waves broke into little white crests.

Savchuk's ears were still full of the sound of sea water dragging at the shingle, though he had left the shore behind him. His mind still held the image of the dark hulk of the destroyer fading into the mist.

He was one of ten Red marines, detailed to discover the exact location of a German shore battery. They had clambered up the steep slope from the shore, clinging to the prickly scrub, until they reached a small pinewood on the summit.

The lieutenant and junior commander plunged first into the woods, parting the bushes cautiously. The Red marines followed, the dense greenery closing around them like the sea.

The silence of the forest seemed almost deafening to Savchuk. It was his first scouting trip on shore. The brushwood crackled under his feet, as loud as pistol shots. On his head, accustomed to its light sailor cap, the steel helmet pressed heavily. It was beginning to rain. The forest oppressed Savchuk used as he was to the slaty spaciousness of the sea.

As though guessing his thoughts, his friend Mitrokhin caught up with him humming in his ear a snatch of doggerel the sailors used to sing to the tune of reveille:—

“You ain't at home no more, my lad,
You ain't at home no more!”

Mitrokhin's broad smile made the forest less oppressive. Savchuk tightened his chinstrap and quickened his pace.

They were following a winding path. At nightfall it led them to an open

field. Not long ago this little clearing had sheltered a farm. The air was still acrid with smoke. The young pines were broken and scorched. The branches lay scattered on the dark earth. In the dim light they were red like crouching foxes. A kitchen stove stood drearily in a heap of charred logs.

Fine ashes crunched underfoot. A small black shadow, the farmhouse cat, rushed up to the marines, mewling plaintively.

"I didn't know there'd been any fighting round here," said Mitrokhin, surprised.

"There hasn't been," replied the lieutenant. "Just a bit of playful bombing by some passing German planes. I suppose the farm people must have gone off to Leningrad." The black cat purred and rubbed itself against Savchuk's legs. He bent down to stroke it, slowly inhaling the heavy smell of burning.

Only one broken-down shed had survived the bombing. The scouts decided to use it as shelter for the night. Three stood on guard outside, collars buttoned closely, for it had begun to drizzle. Inside the shed it was warm and dry. A sudden match flame lit up the lieutenant's broad hands and the bright buttons on Mitrokhin's jacket. Cigarette smoke mingled with the sweet smell of old hay. Then the darkness surged back.

The lieutenant groped for his torch and shone the beam on his men. Savchuk was holding his machine-gun on his knees, carefully wiping the raindrops away with the sleeve of his jacket.

"You take good care of your gun, I see," smiled the lieutenant.

"He's nuts about that gun," interposed Mitrokhin. "He kisses the blinking thing when there's no one around."

"This your first scouting trip ashore, Savchuk?" asked the lieutenant.

Savchuk did not like to admit his inexperience. But he quickly forgot his embarrassment as the lieutenant began to talk about the craft of scouting.

"The scout's job is important—vitally important. And it isn't easy. You've got to be able to crawl on your belly, and tell the different gun calibres by the sound. You've got to have an excellent sense of direction, and a good memory for faces and roads. You've got to be prepared to fight at any moment—and you've got no tanks to break a trail for you, or artillery to cover your advance. You've got only your own courage and wits to rely on."

"The best dodge is to hug the Germans as close as you possibly can," threw in the junior commander. "Then you hit their blind spot."

"Absolutely," agreed the lieutenant. "Have you ever heard of Malakhov?"

The beam from the flashlight slid down the lieutenant's boots to the floor. He picked up a twig and drew a diagram in the dust.

"Our units were stationed here," he explained, indicating a point on his plan. "Point V was over there." The twig sketched in more details.

"Malakhov went off on his motor-bike to reconnoitre. On the way he learned that a German motorised column had just passed by. He stepped on the gas and dashed after them. When he sighted the enemy column it was moving ahead at a slow pace. Malakhov trailed them for six hours. When he'd noted every single detail, he drove back to his own unit at top speed.

"When the Germans went to attack Point V our artillery had it all figured out well in advance, thanks to Malakhov. It must have been a stiff grind for him, riding along in the dust of the German tanks for six long hours."

There was a pause. The lieutenant went on: "The difficulty about reconnaissance is that you've got to have all your wits about you all the time. You've got to take everything in, make decisions on the spot, give orders or act on them, all without a second's hesitation. You see what I mean, Savchuk?"

He laid his hand reassuringly on the young scout's shoulder, then jerked to his feet, tense and alert. A single shot had echoed loudly through the silence of the surrounding woods.

A sentry ran into the shed. "Germans," he said briefly.

Out went the flashlight. Cigarette butts were ground under heels. "Follow me in single file—no noise, mind!" whispered the junior commander.

The rain had stopped. The night was on the wane, though the moon still shone feebly. A milky haze clung to the forest trees. The gnarled roots were slippery underfoot.

Savchuk gripped his machine-gun. The junior commander placed his men at the edge of the field. Savchuk, lying in the dry heather, elbowed his way towards a little mound, on which he placed his machine-gun. Mitrokhin lay to his right.

The silence was suddenly broken by low voices talking in a foreign tongue. Savchuk was astonished. He had never imagined that the enemy was so close. Morning was breaking beyond the woods. The mist dissolved before his straining eyes.

All at once his eye lit on an object at the other edge of the field. At first he took it for a stone—but only for a second. It was a German helmet. He took careful aim, and waited impatiently for the junior commander to give the signal.

Then the chirruping of the birds overhead was drowned in the thunder of the first volley. Savchuk could scarcely hear the voice of his own machine-gun in the din. He only felt the familiar recoil against his shoulder.

He took a profound personal dislike to one particular German gunner. Twice the ground beside him was ripped up by bullets. Savchuk bit his lip in annoyance. He sent another short burst towards the Fascist, but there was a fir tree in between which interfered with his aim.

Suddenly he became aware of an ominous silence to his right. Mitrokhin had dropped face downwards against the ground. He lay heavily and trustingly, as though drinking water from a brook on a hot day.

But his body was very still. "Maybe he's only wounded," Savchuk whispered to himself. But he knew it was not so. He was alone on the flank. He felt as though dead Mitrokhin, the other scouts, the whole Red Army and the entire Soviet country were there at his back, with only himself between them and the enemy.

At that moment the shooting died down. A rustling in the grass told him that his comrades were withdrawing. Did that mean he had to withdraw, too? Savchuk glanced around. German bullets kept raising little geysers of dust. That gunner was combing the field yard by yard to cut off the marines' retreat. And there was that damned fir tree still getting in the way of Savchuk's aim.

The sound of voices from the German side grew louder. An attack was coming.

"Whatever shall I do?" thought Savchuk, licking the salty perspiration from his lips. Oh for a bit of cover, so that he could get that gunner out of the way. Again he looked back, searching for shelter. But the dust was still pitted with incessant enemy fire.

Suddenly he remembered the lieutenant's story of the Soviet scout's six hours' trail in the dust of the German tanks. He looked straight ahead again.

Then his eye lit on a low scrub growing in the middle of the field about a hundred yards from him. There it stood, about half-way between himself and the Germans. It rustled its leaves gently in the morning air.

"It's no more than a hundred yards. I can make it," Savchuk told himself grimly. He pulled some prickly heather from a tussock and fixed it on his helmet to camouflage his head. Then he began to creep forward.

His body, when he crawled away from the comparative security of the hillock, felt as though it was weighed down with lead. When after an eternity he reached the shrub, his sweat-soaked shirt felt cold and clammy. Now the enemy voices were clearly audible. An officer was urging his men forward.

This officer, bullet-headed and grey as a bat, was the first to stand up. Savchuk saw the iron cross and the buttons on the uniform. Narrowing his eyes, he mowed him down with his first volley. The second accounted for his old enemy with the tommy-gun.

A few desultory shots from the German side echoed over the meadow. Then Savchuk saw the German soldiers running, and his ears were filled with a medley of longed-for sound—loud cheers from the Red Navy men, the voice of his junior commander, the rush of the attack as his comrades charged towards the enemy. On the very spot where the German officer had fallen rose the powerful figure of a Baltic sailor. To Savchuk he seemed larger than life, blotting out the distant wood and the figures of the retreating Germans.

When the battle was over, the junior commander sought out Savchuk. "That was good work, comrade. You understood me perfectly."

Savchuk recalled the conversation in the shed, and smiled as he wiped the sweat from his forehead. The wisps of heather still stuck from his helmet like an Indian headdress.

They took the dead officer's dispatch case. On the German's tunic was a swastika held in an eagle's beak. It looked like a spider in its death agony, thought Savchuk. A few baked potatoes had rolled out of a gasmask case belonging to a German soldier lying nearby—cooked, perhaps, on the smouldering ruins of the farmhouse.

It was time to push on. A fresh, salty breeze from the Baltic stirred the sunlit pines.

THE OLD BEEKEEPER

By Nikolai Virta

(As Told to Him by Lieutenant K. of the Red Air Force)

LIEUTENANT K. WAS RETURNING FROM A RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHT. HE HAD discovered German troop concentrations moving up heavy transport convoys with fuel munitions to the bridges and fords of a river. Not later than dawn next day they would attempt to cross and reinforce their weakened units on the other side. The Soviet Command had to be informed immediately.

Two enemy fighters suddenly appeared out of the clouds. The Soviet airman engaged them and brought one of them down in a few minutes. The other dodged and swerved and sent a stream of bullets into the Soviet lieutenant's legs. He had time to bale out before he fainted from pain.

When he regained consciousness he was lying in a hollow at the bottom of which flowed a brook. He drank, washed his wounds and bound them up, and then crawled along the water's edge. Several times he lost consciousness, but finally arrived at the still smoking ruins of a village which had been shelled and bombed.

Only one hut remained standing, a tumbledown affair with an orchard. Under the lime trees stood numerous beehives. The lieutenant crawled towards them and lay in the garden exhausted. A girl's face appeared from behind some bushes. Then the beekeeper himself appeared, a small, thin, grey-haired and barefooted man.

Without saying a word he motioned to the girl and then picked the lieutenant up in his arms and carried him to some bushes. K. lost consciousness again. When he awoke it was still dusk.

There were people in the garden. He could hear their voices. They were talking in German and asking the old man whether he had seen a Russian airman who had landed thereabouts.

The old man was evidently deaf. He spoke in a loud voice, outshouting the Germans who addressed him in German and broken Russian. The old man kept on repeating in both languages:—

"I don't understand. I don't understand. I can't hear. Hard of hearing, I tell you."

"How does the old beggar know our language?" one of the soldiers shouted.

The old man shouted back that he had been a prisoner of war in Bavaria from 1915 to 1918. The soldiers then asked for honey. The old beekeeper told them there would not be any honey until August, and if they didn't believe him they could break open the hives and see what happened.

"Listen, you old faker," one of the Germans bawled. "I think you've gone and hidden that Russian flyer among the beehives."

The old man started shouting at them again and this went on for a while, until one German said: "Come on, Willi, give the old bastard a crack and let's go."

There was a dull thud and then the soldiers went away. "Are you hurt?" the lieutenant called out.

"The sons-of-bitches, they nearly broke my jaw," the old man replied, coming over. "Anyway, you lie still."

"I can't lie still. I have an urgent report to deliver to our side."

"Well, we'll see about that," the old man said. He appeared to be listening intently to the whispering sounds of the evening. Presently the girl appeared out of the gloom.

"They've gone off down Crooked Lane," she reported.

"Who have we got there?"

"Sysoy."

"Let him know that two Germans are passing his way without a machine-gun."

The girl went off. A few minutes later a cuckoo began to call in the distance. It stopped, and after a brief pause it called again. The old man listened, his body tense. Another ten minutes passed and then two shots rang out from the direction of the forest.

"He couldn't get into the Army because he's lame, but he can shoot all right. Been giving my Anna the glad eye. Are you comfortable?"

"Yes, but——"

"We'll have you in a safe place before night. As good as hospital any time."

"But I've got to get to headquarters—not hospital!" the lieutenant said irritably. "I have an urgent report, I tell you."

"Keep your shirt on, my lad. Tell me about it."

The lieutenant gave the details of the enemy's troop movements. Soviet

headquarters must send sappers to the bridge to blow it up and other forces to prevent the enemy from crossing.

When he awoke again he was in a different place, a cave dug into the side of a clay hill. A fire was burning. Around it sat six men with rifles. Anna was stirring a big pot hung over the fire.

A young heavily-built man entered, limping a little.

"Did you get them?" the beekeeper asked him.

"Yes, I got them," Sysoy replied.

Anna unhooked the pot and served out noodle soup all around. She explained that the village women were taking care of the cows in the forest and brought milk to the cave when they could.

While they were eating a slim boy with large bright eyes came in and whispered something to the bee-keeper. The old man threw down his spoon and got up.

"That'll do—we'll finish our soup later. Matvei, give the sign to our boys in the quarry. Lavrushka, run to the Ivanov men and tell them to pass the word to be ready on the bridge at cock's crow."

"See here, comrade commander," the old beekeeper said as he sat down beside the lieutenant. "These are my dispositions." He rolled the word off proudly. "There's a quarry not far from here. We were breaking stones for a roadway and have got some dynamite there, enough for three bridges. That would be all right except that the Germans have installed themselves in the quarry now, they've got cars and soldiers there.

"Now, here is what I propose to do. Sysoy and I will tackle the sentries. I know a bit of German. Then Matvei's boys will come up. We'll get the dynamite, kill a few Germans and get their car away. Then Sysoy can take you to headquarters."

"I shan't let the flyer move," Anna said. "He'll bleed to death."

"Well, then—write out your report and Sysoy will take it."

The lieutenant wrote out his report and then again dropped off to sleep.

He was awakened by a deep rumbling. Fragments of clay and stone dropped from the roof of the cave. A minute later there was another explosion. Then a series of tremendous crashes came from the direction of the bridge, mingled with the drone of aeroplanes.

"Sysoy got through to your unit," Anna said. "Everything is all right now."

THE RESOURCEFUL PILIPENKO

By Nikolai Virta

ON THE SECOND DAY AFTER MY ARRIVAL AT THE FRONT THE DIVISIONAL COMMANDER said to me: "I will give you a man who will go everywhere with you. He knows these parts as well as I do. He is an excellent shot, too." Soon after that a Red Army man appeared and said he was at my disposal. His name was Pilipenko, and he told me he would be 24 next Thursday.

I looked critically at his youthful face, still untouched by a razor. His eyes were clear and candid, his lips full and childish. He was neatly, even smartly dressed. Over his back a sub-machine-gun was suspended and his green steel helmet was pulled low over his forehead.

They'd given me an infant as a guide, I thought.

"Shall I get the boat ready?" Pilipenko asked.

"Yes. We shall leave in 35 minutes."

Exactly 35 minutes later the rubber boat was brought out, and Pilipenko and I departed on a long voyage across some lakes to the headquarters of a certain regiment. Gloomy bare heights frowned down on us. Our light craft was tossed by the waves. It was pitch dark, but Pilipenko steered without deviating once from his course.

"On this spot," he said, pointing to the bare perpendicular cliff that towered above us, "I and another fellow were fired on by the Germans. Bullets went through the boat, but we came out all right."

"But surely it's impossible to climb up here. The water looks very deep indeed," I said.

"We did not climb up. We just sat for three days on the rock we are just skirting. We couldn't move. Battles were going on all around us. We were caught between two fires."

"What did you eat?"

"We didn't eat. We just lay in a crevice."

Pilipenko fell silent again. We rowed for about three hours, tacking along the cliffs in the darkness and the rain.

At last Pilipenko changed his course. We landed on a bank overgrown with bushes. "Have we arrived?" I asked. "Nearly. It's two hours from here; but there's a good road."

Around us was a waste of hills and scrub. I couldn't see any road. Pilipenko went in front of me. We skirted a hollow, waded through a swamp and walked along the river bank for a long time. I was convinced that my young man had lost his way and that at any moment we would fall into the hands of the Germans.

"Perhaps we had better wait for daylight," I suggested tentatively.

"What for? I can see the road like the palm of my hand," said Pilipenko, surprised. "It isn't far."

We went on through what seemed like a pathless wilderness.

"A funny thing happened to me on this spot," said Pilipenko. "I nearly became a commander here."

"Let's hear about it," I said.

"With pleasure," he said. "I was carrying secret documents to regimental headquarters. I was riding hard and overtook a convoy with shells and ammunition. Suddenly machine-gun fire came from that hill to the left. I jumped off the horse, lay on the ground and wondered how the Germans had got here. It was like the end of the world, there was so much noise. Suddenly I heard somebody shouting that the Commander had been killed. The Germans had got the sergeant in charge of the convoy and his assistant. They died at once, so I took command. I gathered the convoy together, got hold of a rifle and led the men into the attack."

"But what about the documents you were carrying?" I asked.

"That's exactly what I was worrying about. If the Germans hadn't been driven away from those heights they would have shot me. So it was absolutely necessary to clear them out."

"And did you?"

"Of course. After that I jumped back on my horse and galloped on to regimental headquarters with the documents. I was a bit late, but then I had some difficulty in riding."

"Why?"

"Oh, I was wounded in the left foot. Now it's all right. I can walk. They made me go to bed. I was three weeks on my back. How bored I was! I tried twice to run away, but they kept too close an eye on us." Pilipenko spat, thereby expressing his contempt for hospital rules.

We tramped on for some time in silence. Then I asked him whether he had been in these parts before.

"I was here once."

"And do you remember the place?"

"Why, of course. According to my calculations there should be a river here. Aha! Here it is."

We approached the river and waded across. It was a shallow, reed-grown stream.

"Here we will rest," said Pilipenko, and sat down on a stone near the bank. I lit my pipe. By the flare of the match I noticed that Pilipenko's steel helmet was dented in many places; one edge was pierced.

"What happened to your helmet? It looks as if it had fallen under a wheel."

"Oh, it was nothing. We were on a scouting expedition in the rear of the Germans. They noticed us and began to plaster us from mine-throwers. I was lying behind a stone. A mine burst nearby and the fragments dropped on the helmet. It was nothing. Everything turned out well. I was only unconscious for a few hours. Have you rested long enough?"

"Yes."

"Then let's go. We are nearly there."

Half an hour later we reached regimental headquarters, which was situated in a cave hewn out of the cliff about 150 feet above the shore. How we crawled up the cliff face is still a mystery to me. Pilipenko did it easily, like a born mountain dweller.

"I suppose you are from the Caucasus?" I asked.

"No, comrade Major. I am from Moscow."

I was astounded. There are very few hills round Moscow, and those are not exactly like the Alps. Pilipenko didn't think his agility at all remarkable. He had learnt his mountaineering since 22nd June, 1941, when he had been sent there with his unit.

At last we reached regimental headquarters, where we stayed some little time.

A few days later we had to ride to an outpost some distance away. They gave us a couple of horses. Pilipenko got the regimental commander's horse, a nervous, bad-tempered mare which I did not even like to approach. Pilipenko pacified the chestnut beauty before you could count two. There was so much of the experienced cavalryman in his bearing that I envied him from the bottom of my heart.

We set off. On the way we had to get off our horses and deal with a few Nazis who tried to intercept us. Pilipenko handled his weapons with real artistry, and a veteran fighter who was lying near me said with admiration: "The lad shoots beautifully! He's a real sniper."

When it was all over we set off again, Pilipenko galloping as though he and his horse were one creature. Remembering how sceptical I had been when I first met him, because of his extreme youth, I felt rather chastened.

"Listen, Pilipenko!" I said humbly. "You shoot like a master sniper, you ride like a Cossack, you are a good sailor, an excellent guide, a remarkable

swimmer and a seasoned scout. What in heaven's name were you before the war?"

"I was a book-keeper in the offices of the Moscow-Volga canal," answered the young man. "Of course, it's interesting being here. Quite good fun. But if you knew how I long sometimes for the office! I wonder who's keeping the books now."

THE WALL

By Pyotr Sazhin

THIS STREET WAS THE QUIETEST IN THE TOWN. HERE THERE WERE NO BOMB-damaged houses, only peaceful gardens and villas. I walked past a long, high wall, topped with a rich coat of ivy and built of large loose stones that were green as old copper with age. Beyond the wall was a garden.

The wall merged into the frontage of a large house with a wrought-iron gate. Beside the gate an old man sat on a red plush upholstered stool. In spite of the warm sun he wore felt boots; on his head he had a fur cap, below which his grey curling hair hung like wisps of bluish smoke. His blue cloth overcoat had a beaver collar.

On the old man's knees lay a gas mask; at his right side stood a bucket of water, and at his left a box of sand and a pair of long-handled tongs.

Although the Germans had not dropped any incendiary bombs on the town so far, he was prepared to deal with them.

His appearance compelled respect. I watched his face with its grey beard and gleaming eyes. He paid no attention to me. His eyes were fixed on the sky. I turned and stared in the same direction. The sky was perfectly clear except for a single cloud which looked like a white swan swimming in an ocean of air.

At first I saw nothing. My eyes were dazzled by the glare of the southern autumn sky. It almost hurt my eyes. But presently I heard a distant throbbing hum. Soon the sound became more distinct. I looked at the white cloud and saw three small black dots at its edges. They grew noticeably in size. The sirens sounded in the town. I turned. The old man was sitting in the same position, but his thin nostrils expanded and contracted and his eyes narrowed.

The planes flew in our direction at great speed. "Go to the shelter," said the old man curtly.

"What about you?"

"I'm on duty," he replied, without removing his gaze from the planes.

At that moment something dropped from the first plane. We heard a whizzing noise rising to a shriek which clutched at one's heart and seemed to crush one's brain. I looked at the old man. His face was stony. He lowered his head. There was a frightful explosion.

The bomb had fallen in a neighbouring street. The blast threw the old man to the ground. The windows of the villa rattled. From the upper storey the glass fell like icicles in March sawn away by the sun's rays. I ran to the old man.

"I'm all right, I'm all right," he said, looking at me severely and trying to get up. But before he had got to his feet the whistling came again, followed

by an explosion. A bomb had fallen somewhere nearby. A blast of air as solid as a sea-wave swept me off my feet.

I must have lost consciousness. Then I heard another explosion and felt a sensation of cold on my spine. The old man was bending over me and pouring water on my head from a mug.

"So you're alive," he exclaimed. He began to say something else, but again came the whistling sound. We both fell to the ground and were showered with earth. It was a near shave. The old man lay motionless. He must have hurt himself badly in falling. I helped him to his feet. He kept muttering "I'm all right," but did not reject my help and leant confidently on my arm. His eyes blinked frequently.

"Still alive!" he remarked with satisfaction. "'Life triumphs!' as the ancients used to say." He brushed the dirt from his clothes and adjusted his gas mask.

I didn't reply, and he seemed a little put out by my silence, for he said: "You don't think I was frightened, do you? I'm not afraid to die. What is terrible is the triumph of death. I'm an old man, as you can see for yourself. But I want to live. I want to live until this terrible war ends.

"I'm a linguist. I know eighteen languages, but in all languages the word 'death' sounds as if somebody was devastating your soul, while the word 'life' lights up even the darkest corners of the human mind. Life is a flower. I love flowers." He looked around and suddenly grew pale. "Look, look what they've done!"

"My flowers!" exclaimed the old man, stumbling through the debris of the wall into the garden. I followed close behind him. The last bomb had fallen into the very middle of the garden.

The wonderful ivy-decked wall was in ruins. Peony petals fluttered into the dust, where they lay like splashes of blood.

The old man stood motionless gazing at the garden. Then he bent down stiffly, lifted a flower and placed it in the breast pocket of his coat. Then, apparently forgetting my presence, he strode to the bench, took off his gas mask, coat and hat, rolled up his sleeves and began to replace the stones of the wall.

Two days later I found myself again in that street. The old man had rebuilt the wall. As before, he was sitting at the gateway, dressed in the same hat, overcoat and felt boots. On his knees lay his gas mask. At his right side was a bucket of water, at his feet a box of sand and the long-handled tongs. His beard gleamed in the sun like new silver.

I went up to him and saluted.

"How do you do, young soldier?" he said genially. "You see, life has again triumphed. The flowers will bloom again. Let the Fascists bomb our beautiful city! Let them invade it! Death will not triumph over us."

He raised his finger. "Everywhere they will come up against an indestructible wall—the wall of our spirit, our unquenchable love of life, our wisdom, our will. Mark my words. You young people should always remember that death will not triumph."

CONCERT BEFORE BATTLE

By Valentin Katayev

SHE HAS JUST COME BACK FROM THE FRONT. WITHIN FOUR DAYS SHE WILL BE leaving again. We are sitting in her room in the Hotel Moskva. Through the windows we can see the big houses and asphalted cross-roads of the heart of Moscow. Camouflaged cars speed down the street and trolley-buses and trams send up sparks. Pedestrians hurry by. It is a grey spring morning, a business-like Moscow day.

She is still filled with her impressions of the front.

Her name is Lydia Ruslanova and she is a well-known singer of Russian folk songs. She wears a simple brown frock; her hair is neatly and smoothly brushed back. Hers is a pure Russian peasant face, and indeed she comes from peasant stock.

Almost from the very first days of war she has been touring various army units and performing for the men. She travels with a small company which includes Prestigiator, the accordion player, violinist and master of ceremonies. They've been everywhere—south, south-west, north. They have given hundreds of concerts.

The Red Army men are unusually fond of art. Music and singing, literature and poetry are in their blood.

Numerous troupes of actors sponsored by the State Committee for Art and the Concert-Vaudeville Association constantly visit units of the Red Army. They are doing a tremendous amount of work. To say that such brigades have given tens of thousands of concerts at various fronts since the war began would be rather an under-statement.

Lydia Ruslanova's activities at the front are typical. She told me about her tour. This is her account of a concert three hundred yards behind the firing line, fifteen minutes before an attack on a fortified point.

Forest. . . . Snow still lying on the ground. . . . A small forester's hut half demolished by shells and fire. . . . The fighting is going on quite close at hand. The artillery is laying a barrage. Shrapnel snips off twigs from the trees. The twigs fall on the snow and cover it with a fine black lace.

Lydia Ruslanova is standing in the snow. The accordion player, her accompanist is sitting on a tree stump. The singer is wearing a bright Moldavian dress and bast sandals. On her head is a flowered kerchief—green roses on a red background, with a touch of yellow and ultramarine. Strings of beads are looped around her neck.

She is singing. Between 100 to 150 men surround her. They are infantry soldiers. They are wearing wide white trousers, white shirts and white turban-like hats wound moorish-fashion around their foreheads—camouflage against the snow. Their faces are as black as the faces of Moroccans. Automatics are slung over their shoulders. They have just come out of battle and in fifteen minutes must launch another attack. This is a concert before the battle.

The vivid colours of Lydia Ruslanova's peasant dress seem to burn. The Russian song rises up high into the trees like a bird. The strains of her pure strong voice mingle with the explosions and whine of enemy mines flying overhead.

The men are listening to their favourite song as if enchanted. Close by is

the western road along which transports, lorries, sledges and field-kitchens are moving. Hearing the voice of the singer, the men one after another turn aside into the clearing by the forester's little house. It looks like a village fair.

Lydia Ruslanova sings another song to her great audience. As she finishes, the echo bears her voice through the woods and breaks against the trees.

A young Red Army man approaches the singer. He says: "You see how filthy we are after the fighting. But your song has washed us clean. Thanks. Sing some more." And once again she sings, sings a sweeping lovely Russian song.

Just then the command is given. The men vanish into the woods. A minute later the very forest trembles with the incessant crack of automatic rifle fire. The attack has begun. Distant shouts of "Hurrah!" are heard.

Now a surgeon comes up to the singer. He asks her to sing for a severely wounded lieutenant who is being brought on a sledge to the first-aid station. The singer walks over to him.

His head is swathed in bandages. Only one bright blue eye is visible. His mouth is parched and he finds it difficult to speak. But the turn of his bandaged head and his eye ask eloquently enough: "Sing!" She bends over him and says softly: "Perhaps it's too hard for you to listen. Perhaps it will hurt you."

The lieutenant's lips move, and scarcely audibly, he whispers: "No, please sing." And she sings softly.

There is not a single sector where the front-line performers do not appear—in trenches, in huts, in bath-houses in the forests, in dugouts. They have an arduous life. They share their all with the army, and every Red Army man, from private to general, reveres them.

The infantrymen bring them steaming hot borshch in their mess tins, and the tankmen offer them their ration of a hundred grams of vodka. The Cossacks solicitously throw their woolly black capes, hooded with vivid scarlet or blue, over the performers' shoulders to protect them from the cold.

It is with a song on their lips, the sweeping song of Russia, that the Red Army men march into battle.

LETTERS FROM THE ARCTIC

By Konstantin Simonov

I.—The Reindeer Express

IT IS MIDDAY. THE SNOW IS BEGINNING TO MELT. A TRAIN OF SLEDGES RACE across a thin crust of ice. It is the "Northern Belle," the reindeer express, the fastest means of travelling in these latitudes.

Now it climbs steep drifts; now it plods through deep depressions filled with snow like saucers of milk.

In the narrow sledges are long bundles wrapped in hospital blankets. These are wounded men, tucked up tightly like cradled infants. The fleet-footed reindeer dash in style across the snowdrifts, but the drivers slow down round sharp curves in order not to disturb their passengers.

It is 30 miles to the hospital. Icebound lakes alternate with hills all along the route. A motor-car could not tackle five yards of this ground. A horse

might manage three miles. A man would drop from exhaustion after six miles. But the reindeer make the trip to the hospital in three hours.

The idea of reindeer transports was first suggested when the Arctic night set in last winter. At the time it seemed a daring if not impossible scheme. Not that the reindeer is a novelty in these parts, but reindeer and war did not seem to go together. One difficulty was that the grim maritime cliffs are in places barren even of Iceland moss, the sole food of the reindeer. Another was that the drivers—men of the Nenets, Saam and Komi peoples—although splendid hunters, had never heard cannon fire.

What would be their reaction to the front line? How would they stand the strain of constant danger? Would they be able to cope with their difficult duties? And last, but not least, how would they get food for their reindeer?

But there seemed no other way out. The nights were pitch-black. The snow piled mountains high, so that whenever you went out you had to drive a pole into the ground by the front door if you wanted to find your mud-hut again. In weather like that the wounded could be evacuated only by reindeer, and only reindeer could bring food, ammunition and barbed wire to the Arctic front-line outposts.

Two veterinary experts, Denisov and Filimonov, were appointed respectively detachment commander and commissar in charge of the scheme. The news of the formation of the "reindeer express" spread rapidly to the State and collective reindeer farms scattered over the Kola Peninsula. People who had never heard a gun responded like true soldiers, from 16-year-old boys to old men with years of nomad life on the Tundra behind them.

The old men rounded up the collective farm herds by methods known to themselves alone. Then they selected the best and most reliable reindeer.

A fortnight later the first reindeer transports trailed across the virgin snow with a load of cartridges and food for the front. Messerschmitts circled over the icebound lakes.

Ivan Matrekhin was in the lead. Four other drivers followed in his wake. Against the white landscape the reindeer were clearly visible from the air as small moving black dots.

A German pilot came down very low and machine-gunned the transport. Ivan Matrekhin had never before seen a plane so near. He had never been machine-gunned before, and did not know what it was all about. But he did know two things. First, he was carrying supplies which must be delivered; second, that these were his reindeer, of which he at all times took better care than of himself.

He pulled up, sat down on the snow beside his reindeer and waited. Four times the plane flew over the transport; four times its machine-gun raised whirlwinds of snow. When the German pilot had exhausted his cartridges the plane made off.

Then Matrekhin unharnessed his reindeer. Three were dead. The wounded animals he tied to the back of the sledges. Then he lit his small black pipe and continued on his way to the front.

Throughout the winter and spring the reindeer transports raced back and forth. Some drivers carried as many as a hundred wounded at a time. Not only did they bring ammunition and food to the front and save the lives of the wounded. They also rescued Soviet pilots who had baled out and strayed to out-of-the-way places. They made it a rule to carry a selection of spare parts in case the planes needed repair after a forced landing.

One night the reindeer detachment received the information that a Soviet

fighter plane had landed 30 miles away, near the front line. The damage was slight, but the plane could not take off. In the evening a German scouting plane had been seen circling above, which meant that German bombers would be there at daybreak.

Every minute counted. The commander and commissar summoned two young Saamese reindeer drivers, the brothers Afanasi and Alexei Zakharov. The men of the North are reticent. Both Zakharovs merely nodded their heads, loaded their sledges with spare parts and disappeared into the treacherous black Arctic night, guiding their team safely past the fissures and crevices that threatened every step.

Two hours before daybreak they reached the plane. The pilot, who had spent the night jigging up and down to keep from freezing, suddenly heard the light hissing of the sledge runners. By daybreak he had repaired his plane and taken off. Five minutes later six enemy bombers came—to find their target gone.

Though it is May, winter has not yet gone. Reindeer teams still climb the snow-covered hills of the Arctic. On the frozen lake surface where the detachment has its headquarters there is a complete encampment built of ice blocks—huts, hospital, even a club house.

Rifle practice is the drivers' favourite leisure occupation. As soon as they have unharnessed their reindeer they begin improving their aim. They have sharp eyes, and they are defending their country, their North.

2.—*The Rammer*

CAPTAIN POZDNYAKOV WAS BURIED IN THE MORNING. HIS COFFIN, COVERED with green fir branches, was carried on a car at the head of the procession. Pilots who fought with him in the last battle gathered to say farewell to their friend.

Standing by the side of his dead comrade was Alexei Khlobystov. His eyes dry and dark with fatigue and lack of sleep, he vowed that he would avenge the death of the friend whose place he now took. After a salute of three salvos, an Air General dropped the first handful of earth into the grave. An hour later Khlobystov was back on duty.

The Arctic spring had set in. The pilots remained on duty for 24 hours at a stretch, ready to take off. There was little enough time for sleep, but even for the few hours allotted for rest Khlobystov could not close his eyes. Memories drifted through his mind.

He remembered the first plane he had seen at close quarters. It was an old training machine which had made a forced landing on a building site near Moscow, where he was working at that time. The plane had seen better days, but the boy was thrilled. He itched to climb into the cabin, grip the controls and take off. Before six months passed he had learnt to fly at the local aero club.

Now Khlobystov is an experienced pilot. The day he brought down his first Junkers his temperature leapt so high with excitement that he had to be taken straight from his plane to the doctor. But that's a long time ago. Now his record card lists 22 planes destroyed by his squadron and six by himself in single combat.

Last autumn, when bringing down his fourth victim, he crashed and was taken to hospital. His breathing was painful. Not, he explained to the doctors,

because his chest ached, but because he always found it hard to breathe freely except above ground. The doctors were of a different opinion, but he insisted that once he got into the air he would immediately get better.

A month later he was flying a new machine. It was a busy day. First he flew with Pozdnyakov on a scouting assignment, then took part in a raid, and later landed to refuel. He stood near his plane, listlessly hearing the petrol bubbling as it was poured into the tanks, and longed for sleep. In 15 minutes he took off with his squadron.

When they sighted 28 German planes heading for Murmansk, Pozdnyakov radioed to him: "Look after the youngsters. I am attacking."

One Messerschmitt crashed after the first attack. Khlobystov manoeuvred to shield his less experienced comrades. A two-seater Messerschmitt 110 appeared below. Taking advantage of his position he swooped down on the German plane and closed in.

They were flying over the edge of a forest when a hill loomed up ahead. He decided to ram the enemy plane. There was a short, strong impact. The German plane crashed on to the hill, and Khlobystov climbed. To his fatigued mind it seemed odd that his right wing was now shorter than the left one. The whole structure was slightly bent. He heard Pozdnyakov's voice over the radio: "One brought down!"

But the plane was difficult to control. The Germans again launched a frontal attack. He saw Pozdnyakov heading for a German machine. It was Pozdnyakov's last fight. Later, when he recalled this incident, Khlobystov realised that Pozdnyakov had decided to bring down the German commander and scatter the enemy formation at the cost of his own life. The Nazi pilot refused to back out of the fight. Flying at terrific speed, the two planes collided.

"I assume command!" Khlobystov's parched lips announced over the radio. "I shall attack, while you cover me from the rear." He saw two German planes heading for him. His fuel was running low, the enemy was still numerous, and he had only four young pilots covering his rear. He decided to ram a second time, not believing he would come out of it alive.

His mind was obsessed with one thought. He must strike and scatter the Germans and help the boys out of the encirclement. As soon as the Nazi plane flying to his right veered aside, he struck at the left one with his damaged wing.

The impact was so strong that for a moment he lost control and dropped earthwards in company with the German machine he had just sent crashing. But as he was falling he instinctively fought on, his intuition, rather than his mind, telling him that his plane was still navigable, that he could still fly. The machine listed, banked and dropped.

People running towards him, the fragment of the wing, the Commissar embracing him—all this he saw through the mists of extreme fatigue. . . . Next morning we buried Pozdnyakov.

A little while later we were preparing to leave the North. We wanted to say good-bye to Khlobystov and asked the Commissar whether he was on duty.

"No, he's in hospital," said the Commissar. "Yesterday he rammed his third enemy plane."

"But wasn't there a simpler way out?" we asked.

"I don't know," shrugged the Commissar. "He'll soon be well. You can ask him then. He will probably tell you it was the only way!"

We heard the story later. The enemy plane had succeeded in damaging the motor of Khlobystov's fighter and he himself had sustained two wounds.

Reckoning that it was impossible for him to get back to the aerodrome, Khlobystov had piled on speed and rammed the enemy, a Messerschmitt 109, which was cut in half by the impact. Khlobystov's plane too was wrecked, but he himself baled out safely.

I often recall Khlobystov, his unruly hair and bright boyish eyes. I think of his occasional recklessness, his preference for narrow shaves. But, above all, I remember his cheerful, brave, indomitable heart.

3.—*Yanks in Russia*

WE ARE WELL USED, BY NOW, TO SEEING AMERICAN SAILORS STROLLING THROUGH the streets of our town. They are cheerful, stalwart lads, dressed in corduroy jackets or leather coats saturated with brine, bright mufflers tied carelessly around their bronzed necks. They have merry inquisitive eyes and a fondness for buying knick-knacks. They love poking about the toyshops, where you can find them laughing infectiously over amusing trifles which they carry away with them as souvenirs of distant Russia. One day these souvenirs will decorate mantelpieces in Seattle or San Diego.

I met Clarence MacCoy on board his ship. A Scotsman by birth and American by education, he went to sea when still a lad, 19 years ago. He has climbed all the steps of the long ladder—from ship's boy to captain. His hair is bleached by the sun of the South Seas, his face weather-beaten by the north wind. This voyage to the Soviet Union was his first as a ship's captain.

Icy northern waters lapped the ship's sides. Overhead stretched a leaden sky still filled with huge puffs of white smoke from a recent air battle. The black muzzles of the ship's A.A. guns and cannon pointed skywards. Members of the crew were strolling on deck, hands in pockets, whistling and exchanging comments on the battle. The nearest bomb had missed the ship by 60 feet.

This was not MacCoy's first experience of the kind. Last year he had been bombed from the air in the Red Sea and the Suez Canal. But it was a novel experience for his men. They stood calmly at their posts and fired simultaneously with the Soviet A.A. artillery.

"What a pity you weren't here an hour ago," they said to me. "A Russian fighter downed a German over the harbour. You should have seen the boys. They yelled and whistled. Saimon, our Filipino cook, danced with joy."

Saimon has been a cook for 25 years. Now he wants to change his trade, and pesters the captain to let him be a machine-gunner. MacCoy introduced me to his chief engineer, a man of sixty, who was pacing the lower deck with a rifle on his shoulder. As a naval reserve officer he fought the Germans in the last war. His ambition is to bring down a plane with his rifle.

MacCoy smiled. "We're all getting handy with our guns. I'm glad the first trip I made as captain was a war voyage to the Soviet Union. The Germans thought they could bar our passage to Russia with their submarines. They certainly don't know our men. Our ships are sailing to Russia and will continue to sail. They imagined their air raids would put us out of our stride while we were unloading in port. But your pilots know their job. The alerts don't worry us. We just carry on. That's how it should be, and that's all there is to it."

The next day I met another American. He was not a captain, but an ordinary sailor, an engineer on a freighter. He was a well-built, fair lad of 29, Norman Edward Darland, born in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Both his father and grandfather were ship's engineers like himself. In 1936 he left the States to fight in Spain with the Lincoln Battalion of the International Brigade. He saw action for more than a year and was wounded at Brunete. Until then he had fought only with a rifle. As soon as he recovered he asked for a machine-gun. He needed it to settle accounts for his friends. It was in Spain, in 1936, that he met the Germans for the first time.

To make this trip he left his job in the Baltimore dockyards. The captain formally warned the crew that the voyage was a dangerous one. That made no difference, except that eyes brightened at the prospect of a scrap.

Darland's early training as a machine-gunner came in very handy during four Nazi raids on their ship in the Arctic Ocean. He was too modest to claim that he personally had downed a plane. But the fact remains that of nine planes which attacked them, four were sent hurtling into the water.

The Germans again raided his ship while she was in a Soviet port. Darland could hardly be restrained from having a smack at the Nazis with his machine-gun, although the Russian A.A. defence could perfectly well cope with the situation.

He does not pretend that the trip from U.S.A. to the U.S.S.R. is an easy voyage. But he and his shipmates are prepared to make it as often as necessary, to bring munitions of war to their Russian comrades.

PROFESSOR SCHULTZ

By Vladimir Vishnevsky

I AM A WRITER, AND OFTEN ENTERTAIN WOUNDED RED ARMY MEN BY READING to them. Recently I visited a military hospital. When I was through with the reading, a wounded Major approached me and said that an old acquaintance of mine, a Professor Schultz, wanted to see me. I shrugged my shoulders. I couldn't recall any Schultz.

Entering the patients' room, I saw a little man lying before me. He was an extraordinary sight. He looked perfectly flat, as if he had been cut out of paper. His rigid hands were being warmed by two bright electric lamps. His nose and lips were covered with dark green ointment, and his little red beard seemed to have been pasted to the sheet. For the life of me I could not recall having met him before. Noticing my embarrassment, he laughed softly.

"You've forgotten? Well, I don't wonder. We met exactly 20 years ago. in the House of Art. I was only a student then. Remember our argument about the Scythians?"

Like a flash I remembered. I recalled my youth on the shores of the Neva, the literary circle founded by a group of young people, endless talks . . . Schultz was a Leningrad German. His ancestors emigrated from Germany during the reign of Catherine the Second. They married Russians, and Russia bewitched them like a woman.

"Schultz, where have you come from?" I cried. "What has happened to you?"

"Frostbite. I got a splinter wound, too,"

"You were in the Army?"

"No, I was a volunteer, a guerilla," he said with a smile. "I left for the front in July."

Sitting in an armchair beside his bed, I heard the wonderful story of how Professor Schultz of Leningrad, authority on ancient history, fought the Germans in swamps and forests near Leningrad for nearly six months. How he crept along narrow secret paths with a bag of explosives on his back. How he hid for hours in the snow under a railway embankment, waiting for an enemy ammunition train. How he sent a spark from his pocket battery under the wheels so that a volcano of fire erupted before his eyes.

But once disaster overtook him. Schultz was leading his group through a new, dangerous zone. He walked in front. In the forest they walked into an ambush of picked German troops. A sudden burst of fire separated Schultz from the rest. He dived into a small hollow in the snow and shouted to the guerillas: "Save yourselves! There's no sense in all of us perishing!"

He always took care of his people. His detachment escaped, wandering for three days in the forest. Meanwhile Schultz lay in the snow as though in an icy grave, keeping off the Germans with his automatic rifle. He had 78 cartridges.

He suffered a great deal during the first day. Even the old pines around him cracked with the frost. During the second day he was semi-conscious. One of the Germans succeeded in running up and throwing a hand-grenade at him. He was wounded. On the third day, afraid of falling asleep, he recited passages from Cæsar aloud. He imagined he saw the Roman's birdlike profile. It was a nightmare.

At night the moon floated like a blue volcano. Keeping count of his bullets, Schultz fired almost automatically at the black shadows that crept up to him. They screamed and disappeared. Some died on the snow, groaning. Schultz was an excellent shot.

The third night came on. For the first time in his life Schultz thought with dread of the coming morning and the sun. Suddenly a Soviet trench-mortar barked from the forest. The Germans immediately hid behind snowdrifts. Schultz raised himself and, overcoming his pain, crawled toward the forest. Then he was picked up by our troops.

Three months passed. Green leaves appeared on the trees. Schultz was well on the way to recovery. He was restless. His bandaged hands reminded me of the round, soft paws of a rabbit. All the fingers had been amputated. Schultz spoke with admiration of the surgeon's skill.

"Here, on the middle finger of the right hand, he saved part of the lower phalange," he explained. "He's promised to attach a sort of hook to it. Then I'll be able to pull a trigger. Yes, I'll get back all right! Why do you look at me like that? Do you think I like killing? No. It's something different. Hitler cannot be tolerated in the civilised world. We Germans should be especially conscious of that. And I shan't be through until he's through."

YURI AND THE LION

By Nikolai Tikhonov

YURI WAS NOT ONE OF THOSE SMALL BOYS WHO ARE ALWAYS GETTING IN YOUR way. He was an independent little fellow, although he was only seven. Most of his days were spent in the park or in the street. But his favourite haunt was the Leningrad Zoo, just across the way from his house.

But of all the animals in the Zoo, the one he loved best was the huge plaster

lion that stood on a pedestal at the gates. From the moment he first set eyes on that lion Yuri was smitten with awe and admiration for his magnificent mane, his serene and noble expression.

"He's guarding the park so the brigands won't hurt the animals, isn't he, mummy?" he once asked his mother.

"Of course he is," his mother replied absently. Yuri was very pleased that she agreed with him on this important point.

The big plaster lion towered magnificently over the entrance, and whenever Yuri passed by he gave him a friendly and respectful nod.

The air-raid sirens howled over the city, and nervous mothers hastily dressed their children and sent them down to the shelters. Yuri sat on a bench in the cellar, his little heart thumping. Unfamiliar, frightening noises reached his ears. Sometimes the cellar would tremble as though in fear, and the old women would cross themselves. "Those brigands have come over," they would say.

Then suddenly the building shook with such violence that it seemed to Yuri as if some terrible giant had tried to tear it out of the ground, foundation and all, like a tree, but had thought better of it.

"That was a near one," Yuri's mother remarked. "Just over the road, I think."

She was right. When the "all clear" sounded everyone rushed out to see where the bomb had fallen, Yuri, with his mother, among the first. It had fallen in the Zoo. A cow elephant had been killed outright, some monkeys had been injured, and a terrified sable had been seen running wildly down the street.

Yuri burst into loud weeping. "Don't cry, darling," his mother tried to comfort him. "The monkeys will get well and they'll find the sable and bring him back."

But Yuri was crying for a different reason.

"Mummy," he sobbed. "The lion, the lion!"

There was so much grief and despair in his voice that his mother involuntarily glanced where he was pointing. His idol, the magnificent plaster lion, lay on his side, his huge white head resting pathetically on his paw. The hind legs had been blown off. One front paw was smashed to pieces.

Yuri dashed over to the heap of debris that lay at the foot of the pedestal, searching frantically for something, while the tears continued to flow. At last he seemed to have found what he sought and thrust something into his pocket.

"Yuri, what are you doing in that rubbish heap?" his mother called. "You'll get yourself all dirty."

But Yuri remained sombre. Even a white fox which had escaped from its cage and was running loose over the gardens did not interest him. He had eyes only for the lion.

One evening a travel-stained Red Army man came to see Yuri's mother. He sat drinking tea and telling stories about the front, especially about mother's brother who had been decorated with the Order of the Red Banner. Yuri, who had been running about in the street all day long, was too sleepy to listen, and presently his mother sent him to bed.

"Is it true Uncle Misha has the Order of the Red Banner?" he asked when she came to kiss him good night.

"Yes, dear. He fought like a lion, they say. You must be as brave as he when you grow up. When Uncle Misha comes home he'll teach you how to fight."

"Mummy," Yuri whispered excitedly, "did he fight like that lion at the Zoo?"

"No, no!" his mother said, puzzled. "It's just what people say when someone fights bravely. Now go to sleep or you won't be able to get up when the siren goes."

Sirens had become a commonplace. Often Yuri's mother couldn't find her son when the alert sounded. He would be somewhere in the street, or on the roof with the fire-watchers, or helping at the ambulance post. He was quite unafraid of the anti-aircraft guns, of the shaking of buildings and the dull thud of the bombs.

"Where have you been all day?" she demanded on one occasion. "I've been hunting for you all over the place. You mustn't go so far away from the house, do you hear? If your father were at home he'd be very angry with you for not obeying your mother."

"I'm building a barricade at the back of the house," Yuri replied with dignity.

"What barricade?"

"They're building one in the main street, mummy. I watched them doing it; and now we're building one in our backyard—me and the boys next door."

Three days later Yuri was brought home unconscious after a heavy raid. The blast from a bomb had knocked him down. Pale and distraught, his mother undressed him with trembling hands. After a while he regained consciousness. Luckily he was unhurt.

"I was guarding the barricade from the brigands," he said guiltily. "I'm all right, mummy. Don't worry."

His mother was rummaging in his pockets for his handkerchief. All sorts of odds and ends fell out.

"Why do you collect all this rubbish, Yuri?" she asked. "And what's this?" she added, holding up a chunk of grey plaster that had once been white.

"Oh, mother!" Yuri cried. "Don't touch that. That's a bit of my lion's paw!"

Mother examined the piece of plaster in amusement. Sure enough, there was the clear outline of a large, semi-circular claw.

"Why, whatever do you want it for?" she asked. "Is this what you found on the rubbish heap at the Zoo?"

"It's my lion's paw," Yuri repeated, his little forehead wrinkled earnestly.

"But what are you going to do with it, darling?" his mother asked tenderly.

Yuri reddened. "Oh, nothing. But I'm going to punish those brigands for killing him. You just wait!"

Next day he was back at his barricade.

WITH THE SECOND RED ARMY

By A. Kapler

1.—*How They Started*

WE WERE FLYING WESTWARD TOWARD THE SETTING SUN. THE LAST SOVIET village was left behind as our plane neared the front line. Darkness fell. In the distance we saw tiny spurts of fire, like so many matches being struck somewhere far down below. Away to the left a town was in flames.

Crossing the front line, we flew over forests dotted with swamps and lakes. Through the icy, moonlit night we kept on, over hills and snow-blanketed woods, deep into the enemy's territory. Finally we saw the signals we had been waiting for—Verrey rockets soaring up one after another.

We made a landing in the centre of a frozen, snow-covered lake. In the distance we could see people sitting around a camp fire. Then someone came towards the plane, shouting cheerfully, but the roar of the engines drowned his words. He carried a brief-case.

So this man, his face bearded to the eyes, a sack over his shoulder and a knife at his belt, was a guerilla fighter! I had never imagined that people who lived in forest dugouts and spent their days and nights blowing up bridges, laying ambushes, and wreaking death and destruction on the enemy could have such a peaceful look about them. Though he carried a tommy-gun and wore an ammunition belt, the brief-case gave him an incongruously civilian look.

This district controlled by the guerillas stretches for many miles along the front and deep into the German rear. The collective farms are still functioning, guarded by armed guerilla detachments. The village Soviets have been restored, and what are known as "district committees of three for restoring Soviet power" are at work. The flax has been scutched and stored away; it is being saved for the day when the district is liberated from the invaders.

The schools are open, the medical and veterinary services are functioning, and a newspaper called *The People's Avenger* is published regularly.

The constant excitements of life in the guerilla country give daily existence a zest which is relished even by the old folk. They enjoy learning passwords, giving signals and keeping secrets.

The guerillas will tell you, smiling, how at the beginning they hid from everyone. They'll tell you how once, in the early days, an old man driving a cart loaded with munitions took such fright at the sight of some people ahead of him on the road that he deserted his cart and took to his heels. Fortunately they were only his neighbours. They took the horse by the bridle and brought the cart to guerilla headquarters.

The daring of the guerillas was no sudden growth. It is the result of experience. At first the men and women who left their farms and offices and took to the woods were just as nervous and even timid as you would expect peaceable folk to be, when suddenly confronted with desperate events.

Last summer a group of guerillas from the "Grozny" detachment was ordered to blow up a bridge. They laid the charge so that it could be set off by pulling a rope at a considerable distance, and then went off to await the German column, which was still some distance away.

While they were waiting they saw a wagon driven by two Germans approaching from the opposite direction. The guerillas, thoroughly flustered, opened random fire, and someone pulled the rope in his agitation, blowing up the bridge from which their proper victim, the German column, was still a good two miles away. The horses were killed and both Germans took to their heels. Later, in the forest, the guerillas had a good laugh at their own expense.

"Well, we've begun," someone chuckled. "We'll write that off as our baptism of fire."

To-day the "Grozny" detachment is known far and wide for its daring exploits and its major victories over the Germans.

At first there were collective farmers who were sceptical about the strength of the guerillas.

Late one afternoon of last summer a German unit passed through a certain village. A stout officer rode past in a staff car. An ugly-looking dog sat beside him on the back seat, its tongue hanging thirstily out.

The collective farmers duly informed the guerillas about the regiment's movements, and at twilight the partisans mounted their horses and rode through the village after the Germans.

The farmers leaned against their gates, watching them pass by. Then they went into their houses shrugging their shoulders, and said to their wives: "Well, we'll see what we shall see."

Shortly afterwards firing and explosions were heard; two hours later the guerillas returned to the village, and the farmers put them up for the night.

The unit commander spent the night in the cottage of an old man whose twanging, nasal voice had earned him the nickname of "the deacon." His wife, of course, was "the deaconess."

After the commander had lain down to sleep the "deacon" threw aside the blankets, got quietly out of bed, gave his wife a broad wink, and disappeared. He returned at dawn with a new expression on his face.

"Where have you been?" his wife began to scold.

"Ssh! It's true all right," he told her. "They're lying there finished, sure enough. The Germans and the horses too."

"What about the fat one?" the old lady wanted to know.

"He's there, too. Saw him myself. Dead as a doornail." "And the dog?"

This time it was the commander who answered. He opened his eyes sleepily. "The dog, too, grandmother," he said grinning. "I killed him myself."

The old folk were embarrassed.

"Now son, there's no need to be offended," the old man said. Then, trying hard to sound convincing: "As a matter of fact, I had to go out on business, and while I was out I thought I might just as well take a look at those dead Germans."

"That's all right, grandpa," the commander smiled.

"Yes, son, you've taught us something," the old lady said. "We thought those Germans were like dragons, breathing fire, and rumbling like iron chains. We thought they couldn't be killed. But now we know better. The worthless fellow, all puffed up, with his ugly dog!" But the commander was asleep again.

As more and more Germans met their just deserts, as trains were wrecked and bridges came crashing down, the attitude of the farmers towards the guerillas underwent a profound change. They not only helped them. They believed in their strength.

In one village the chairman of the local Soviet was a woman, P. Her husband was with the Red Army, and after the Germans invaded her village she went off with the guerillas. Their little daughter remained at home with her grandfather. Once, when P. had returned home to visit them, Germans entered the village and took up quarters in the various houses.

A lieutenant in command of a unit, with his interpreter, were billeted in P.'s home. The lieutenant at once set about looking for the chairman of the village Soviet, never dreaming that he was living in her very house and that the chairman herself was waiting on him.

One after another the peasants were brought in and questioned as to the whereabouts of P. Without exception they replied that they couldn't understand what was wanted of them, and had no idea whom it was the lieutenant sought. The officer was enraged. P. stood in a corner and, with shining eyes,

looked at her fellow villagers. This was a momentous day for her; she had helped to educate these people.

At last a farmer admitted that he understood whom the lieutenant was looking for and would be glad to show him the chairman's home. He led the officer to a ruined house and said that P. had lived there, but that a German bomb had demolished the building long ago and killed its owner. The entire village backed up this version. The lieutenant went on with his unit, and P. returned to her guerilla detachment.

To-day the collective farmers are taking united action against the invaders. The guerilla fighters teach them what to do when no arms are to hand; how to scald the Germans with boiling water, to wound them with hot pokers or iron bars, and whatever else lies to hand in peasant households.

Guerilla warfare, the struggle against the Germans, has become a commonplace of everyday life, as familiar a thing as work in the fields, or rainfall. It is as necessary to kill the Fascists as it is to plough, to sow, to eat, to breathe, and to live.

2.—*Guerilla Justice*

In a Nazi-controlled district near the borders of guerilla territory, the "burgomaster" called a meeting of all the village elders, the local administrators installed by the Germans. The burgomaster himself didn't get along to the meeting. The young boys of the village, after an unsuccessful attempt to kill him or at least burn down his house, caught him in the bathhouse and scalded him nearly to death.

His assistant conducted the meeting. He announced that the elders were to draw up lists of the quantity of food which each village could supply to the German army. The meeting was in full swing when the door was flung open and three guerilla fighters strode into the room. Two of them remained guarding the doorway, while the third went up to the table.

Smiling grimly at the disconcerted faces of the elders, he said: "The agenda will be revised. In the first place, the discussion on helping the Germans is struck off the record. We have another question to consider: what and how much will be contributed to the guerilla movement, and by whom. That's the first point. Now for the second. Your chairman I order to be taken outside and shot."

At first the burgomaster's assistant cringed, imploring mercy. Then, seeing that the guerillas were as hard as granite, he tried another approach.

"Who are you anyway, to give orders," he shouted. "Shoot him, shoot him, you say, but who gave you the right to shoot people? Can you produce any kind of credential, even a Soviet one, that gives you the right to shoot people?"

The guerilla fighter glanced at him contemptuously, took a crumpled paper out of his pocket and threw it on the table.

The burgomaster's assistant gaped. "What's this you're giving me? Just look what's written here! 'Of primary importance is the collection of rags, bones, tin cans and similar scrap that can be used as raw material.' Just as I thought! There's nothing here that gives you the right to shoot people."

"Give it to me," the guerilla fighter replied.

He moistened a stump of indelible pencil, leaving a bright purple mark on his lips. Then he inserted the following words, in bold sweeping letters,

between the last line and the signature of the manager of the local Raw Material Base.

"Has the right to shoot anti-Soviet people."

Then he returned the paper to the burgomaster's assistant, saying:—

"Now let's get down to brass tacks. We know all about your fine record, we know about the people you've squealed on, and those you've robbed to feed and clothe the Fascists, and those you've hanged. We know all about it. The time has come to square accounts."

The burgomaster's assistant was shot before the whole village, and the "elders" received exact instructions on the provision of supplies for the guerillas. It must be added that all those instructions were carried out the next day to the letter.

To be appointed a village elder in a guerilla-controlled district is as good as a death sentence. These traitors are killed on the very day they are installed in office. So are the German "managers" of the collective farms. Every traitor, every German hireling, is picked off.

Spies, traitors and deserters are still being weeded out. A suspicious person no sooner makes his appearance in a guerilla district than he is captured. Every village has its outpost, its guard and its armed patrol.

All accused persons are tried by three judges, men who formerly worked in the Soviet courts. All sentences require the confirmation of the guerilla command.

I was present during the questioning of three suspicious characters. Two of them had a sewing machine, produced credentials of a sort, and claimed they were tailors. One was a young fellow, the other somewhat older. They were terribly frightened, and blurted out everything as soon as they were arrested.

It appeared that in the village of S. the Germans had opened a school for reconnaissance men. The course lasted for two or three weeks. Purely military instruction was given: how to penetrate Red Army positions; how to reconnoitre and return; or how to penetrate a district where the guerillas were in control, investigate their number, arms and position, and then return. The trainees were given the address of a German agent to whom they were to report.

These two "tailors" were graduates of this school. When captured by the guerillas they were out on a scouting assignment for the Germans. Their Nazi superior had assured them that they were not being sent into guerilla country, but into the German rear, that they had nothing to worry about, and that, if necessary, they'd be helped out of a tough spot.

But things didn't turn out that way. The "tailors" were brought before Soviet justice. Their course of study under the Germans had been far too short.

The third traitor was his own accuser. He had given himself up to Soviet justice, feeling unable to bear the weight of his guilt. He explained that he had seen the Red Army retreating, had been uncertain what to do, and had lost hope in the future struggle. Everything seemed to be over, and one had to start life all over again. He felt he had to "fix things up somehow for himself," so he placed himself at the service of the Germans.

Time passed, and he witnessed the Germans' treatment of the Russian people and the Jews. In a German paper published in the Russian language he read an article which boiled down to an assertion that the German soldier was the ruler of the world, and all other creatures were his slaves. Then it was he realised the depth of his degradation and made up his mind to confess the whole story. He finished:—

"I'm not asking for mercy. I thought, before, that I'd come and ask to be

given a gun. I wanted to die in battle from an enemy bullet. But then I realised you'd never trust me with a gun. There are plenty of people without a record like mine, good people. Ours is a great people. Why should they give a gun to a traitor? And so now I've simply come so I can die at home."

The prisoner told how he had betrayed B., the chairman of a collective farm, to the Germans. The court investigator looked around. B.'s son was standing there in the room, a rifle in his hand; he was a sentry. The boy's face twitched. He lit a cigarette.

The traitor continued to give his evidence.

3.—*Guerilla Funeral*

The coffin lay on the ground in the village graveyard, surrounded by a guard of honour armed with rifles captured from the Germans. Little boys nestled like birds in the branches of nearby trees, watching the scene.

The commander and commissar of the local guerilla detachment came up and stood over the open coffin, their tall fur caps in their hands.

The features of the man who lay in the coffin were calm and serene, as if he had died a natural death in his bed, and not on the battlefield. He was a grey-bearded old man with a wide Russian face, prominent cheekbones and broad nose. In the lapel of his jacket shone a glimpse of gold—a brand-new Order of the Red Banner.

He had received the decoration only a week before his death. A representative of the Red Army command flew to guerilla territory. Shortly after his arrival the detachment lined up in the woods around a sleigh covered with straw. On top of the straw lay a newspaper, and on it four Government decorations. The representative of the Command placed the orders into the coarse, weather-beaten hands of four guerilla fighters and congratulated them.

I was shown a small newspaper published in long-hand by the detachment. It contained an item by the old man, who had written:—

I appreciate the high honour. As long as a drop of blood runs in my veins I will fight for my Country's freedom and happiness.

The detachment commissar opened the memorial meeting. Then the comrades of the dead man came forward one after another to make brief speeches.

Every now and then the speakers paused as a German plane flew over. But the enemy pilots did not notice the tiny gathering, or the red flag that fluttered in the wind.

Some two hundred yards from the cemetery a fox was frisking about. But except for the boys perched in the trees no one paid the slightest attention to it. Multitudes of animals have come out during the war. All the forests and fields are thickly covered with their tracks.

Then the commissar began to speak of the selfless life of the guerilla fighter who had died in battle. When he had finished, he took the decoration from the old man's lapel and fastened it to the banner of the detachment.

At the head of the coffin, among the guard of honour, stood another old man, the closest friend of the dead guerilla. He was a burly fellow, dressed in a quilted mackintosh and huge felt boots that had seen considerable wear. As he stood there shouldering his rifle, tears rolled down to his grey, tobacco-stained moustache. He stood erect and motionless.

The two old men, Ivan Semyonovich and Terenti Petrovich, had been bosom friends. They were the same age, had grown up together in Leningrad and married at the same time. In their old age their friendship grew even closer, and when Ivan Semyonovich was appointed director of a tractor station Terenti Petrovich went with him and worked at the same place as senior mechanic.

After the region was occupied by the Germans the two old men joined a group of guerilla fighters in the woods. Ivan Semyonovich was appointed quartermaster and Terenti Petrovich became his assistant.

In spite of the hardships of guerilla life, the old men tried to make themselves comfortable wherever they happened to be. A wall clock, a calendar and a blue tin washstand were their constant companions. The first thing they did when they pitched a new camp in the woods was to fasten their clock to the trunk of a pine tree. Under it went their calendar, and on the ground at the foot of the tree their blue washstand. Around these reminders of home they placed the detachment's supplies.

At first the old men easily became frightened, particularly as dark fell. Before they went to sleep they used to spread dry twigs all around them so as to be awakened by the cracking noise if anyone should approach during the night.

Gradually, however, they grew accustomed to the life and began to show their mettle. They distinguished themselves particularly during a raid on the town of D. It was for his courage in this raid that Ivan Semyonovich received the Order of the Red Banner.

The two men also gave a good account of themselves as quartermasters. They cleared the snow from fields where big battles had taken place last autumn. Under the snow they found considerable quantities of arms and ammunition, which was removed to the guerillas' arsenal.

The coffin was lowered into the grave. The men raised their rifles and fired a salute.

At the noise the fox started and dashed for the woods.

The funeral over, the gathering broke up. Then the commander of a group of detachments called over to him the commander of the local unit, in which the old man had served.

"You are reduced to the ranks," he informed the local commander. "And be grateful we are not putting you up against a wall."

On the way back to camp the group commander was silent and frowning.

"The only reason I didn't shoot him," he said finally, speaking of the detachment commander, "is because I don't know what's behind the whole business. You see, he's conservative. He has set ideas and he can't forget them. He's used to having a battle begin with artillery preparation, so that's how he begins!"

It turned out that the detachment had made its way far northward and had been instructed to attack point K, in conjunction with Red Army units.

The detachment commander, newly appointed to the post, led his men into attack. Previously, however, he had determined the location of the enemy's firing-stations and had shelled them with mine-throwers captured from the Germans. He had acted just as if he were commanding a unit of regulars at the front and not guerilla fighters behind the enemy's lines.

No sooner had they fired the first shell than the Germans appraised the situation and met the attackers with a squall of fire. The result was that the guerilla fighters lost their main advantage over the enemy—unexpectedness. The detachment suffered heavy losses and did not succeed in its task.

"Of course, they accounted for a certain number of Germans," the group commander went on, "but the ratio should be at least one to twenty, and we should strive to make it one to a hundred—one hundred Fascists for every guerilla fighter killed. And that fellow sent men to their death all because of his set ideas! It's a pity, because you don't find men like old Ivan Semyonovich at every step."

4.—*Guerilla Wedding*

Several houses in the village of N. had been wrecked in that morning's bombing. We decided to stay there until nightfall and then move on. We walked into one of the cottages and were given a hearty welcome by an old woman.

"Greetings, Nikolai Grigoryevich! Greetings, my boy!" she said to the commander. "My! Did we have a rumbling and a thundering this morning! The planes came down as low as the thatch! All the neighbours crawled into the cellar. We thought we were all done for."

Several other women came in and stood around us in a ring.

"Do you know? We're living in the bathhouse now, because our house has been wrecked."

"Every time I remember what happened I quite lose my appetite."

"And where do you go during raids?" the commander asked the old woman.

"Where do you hide? Do you go with the others into the cellar?"

"Who, me? No, lad. I jump into bed and put my head under the blankets."

"Aren't you afraid?"

"No, once I've got my head covered up I'm not afraid."

Just then a well-built, rosy-cheeked young man with curly fair hair walked into the house. With him was a bright-eyed girl in a white sheepskin jacket. The young man was lavishly hung with sundry weapons, in guerilla style. His companion had a huge automatic pistol in her belt. It was booty taken from a German she herself had killed. Now, however, she was no longer a fighting member of the detachment, but served in it as a nurse.

Before the war the young man had been employed as agent for a milk-purchasing organisation. Then he joined the guerillas. Nowadays only one thing ever worries him—the thought that a good deal of milk in the district must be turning sour.

The young man asked permission to speak to the commander. Then he hummed and hawed for a long time about war being war, you know, and life being life, and life not standing still, you know, and one having feelings. But he was such a long time in reaching the point that at last the girl interrupted him and handed the commander an application. It was written in the usual form, but the request it contained was rather unusual. The couple wanted permission to marry.

"We want to have it legal," the young man explained.

The commander fingered the application for a minute or so. "By rights this should be handed to the commissar," he said. "Oh, well, let's have a pencil!"

And in the left-hand corner he wrote:—

"The marriage is hereby legalised."

Before our departure that evening a wedding party was held. In high voices the young women sang:—

“Hitler said in a few days
He’d make us all his slaves.
But soon the Fascist saw
That this was a different sort of war.

“Now get together, girls,
Get ready for the fray.
Hitler is our enemy
And we’ll fight him night and day.”

We came out into a cold, starry night. The village nestled in a hollow rimmed with tall pines which threw sharp shadows in the greenish-white moonlight.

We walked down the main street to the hospital for guerilla fighters. Doctor Lydia R. showed us around. In the middle of the main ward stood an iron stove, its coals glowing red. The corners of the room were shrouded in darkness. Most of the men were asleep, but a young man with bandaged neck, shoulders and chest was sitting up near the window. Apparently his wounds disturbed him, for he rocked back and forth in his chair.

As we stood there another man awoke and rubbed his eyes with his left hand. His right was in a plaster cast and hung awkwardly at his side.

“I was dreaming about summer time in Kiev, where I was born,” he said faintly. “I dreamt our team was playing volley-ball at the stadium. We were all in jerseys and white trousers. The sun was shining. When the ball went up high you bent back your head and could see the tops of the poplars and the blue, blue sky. . . . Who’s got a smoke, fellows?”

Someone rolled him a cigarette.

“You’ll see it all again,” grunted the man in the chair by the window. “Life is not ending. It’s just beginning. We have the job of battling evil. Unless we did the job, it would be hard for life to go on. But there’ll be an end to this evil, and then how eagerly people will breathe again! How they’ll value each swallow of water they’re able to drink in peace! How happily the young couples will stroll by the river knowing they won’t have to part! They’ll be able to live, breathe and rejoice! And how they’ll value life. They’ll realise the value of this life we’ve paid for with blood.”

He sat motionless, his gaze fixed on the fire. A red glare lit up his face as he dreamed his visions of the future.

“Yes,” said the other man. “They’ll be happy. Ah, how lucky they’ll be!”

“But I don’t envy them,” came a voice from the corner. “I wouldn’t change places with them!”

THE LAST DISPATCH

By Evgeny Petrov

E. Petrov, the well-known Soviet writer, famous for his humorous-satirical novels written in collaboration with Ilya Ilf, died in July, 1942, on active service as a war correspondent. He was aboard the destroyer “Tashkent” when she

broke through the blockade and reached Sevastopol. On his return from the besieged city, aboard the same ship, Petrov began to write his last dispatch, which dealt with this expedition. Death at his post interrupted his work. The unfinished manuscript was brought to Moscow. Here it is:—

THE OPERATION CARRIED OUT BY THE "TASHKENT" WILL FIGURE IN NAVAL textbooks as an example of daring blockade-running. It will also live in the memory of our people as a remarkable example of military valour and of the grandeur and beauty of the human spirit.

The men knew exactly what the trip involved. No one harboured any illusions about that. The *Tashkent* was to break through the German blockade to Sevastopol, unload ammunition and take aboard women, children and wounded men, break through the blockade once again and return to her base.

At 2 p.m., on 26th June, the long, narrow destroyer, painted pale blue, left harbour. The weather was murderous—a smooth unruffled sea, clear sky and scorching sun. Worse weather for running a blockade was hardly conceivable. "They'll attack from the sunny side," I heard someone say on the captain's bridge. For a long time quiet prevailed, however, and nothing disturbed the dazzling azure calm of sea and sky.

The *Tashkent* looked distinctly odd. Every deck and passage was crammed with sacks and crates. She might have been a disreputable old freighter instead of the trimmest and fastest vessel in the Black Sea Fleet. But the crates and sacks contained ammunition and supplies for the defenders of Sevastopol.

Passengers were lying or sitting on every inch of free space. They were Red Army men going to the aid of the fortress. Most of them were Siberians who had never set eyes on the sea before in their lives.

The Red Army men had their own independent arrangements to make. When we had been at sea for a few hours the commander of the destroyer had a consultation with the battalion commissar. Then orders were issued, and the Red Army men began to drag heavy machine-guns fore and aft. The light machine-guns they placed to port and starboard. Then they settled down comfortably, ready to let the enemy have it in any direction.

It was obvious that the Red Army men regarded the ship as territory which they held, and the sea as enemy-occupied territory. Therefore, in accordance with the rules of warfare, they were proceeding to organise an all-round defence. The crew of the *Tashkent* did not mind in the least. Indeed, they were pleased. "Just look what eagles we are taking ashore!" they said. Friendly relations were immediately established.

At 4 p.m. an alert sounded. A German scouting plane appeared in the sky. The destroyer's A.A. guns opened fire and the scout vanished. Hundreds of eyes searched the skies and the sea through binoculars. Meanwhile the *Tashkent* sailed full steam ahead in the quiet before the inevitable battle.

The clash occurred an hour later. We had been expecting torpedo-carrying planes, but long-range Heinkels appeared instead—13 of them. They swooped on the ship from the sunny side, one after another, and dropped their loads. It seemed to me as though they went about it very deliberately and slowly.

Everything—the success of the expedition, the fate of the ship and the people aboard her—depended in those moments on one man. Captain Vassili Yaroshenko, commander of the *Tashkent*, a man of medium height, broad-shouldered, swarthy-complexioned, with a coal-black moustache, never left the bridge during that voyage.

Standing there unperturbed, he scanned the skies, took his decisions in

fractions of seconds and communicated them in matter-of-fact tones to the helmsman. The ship, its whole bulk shaking, veered from side to side. Geysers of water and splinters rose up to right and left, in front and behind us.

The battle lasted nearly three hours, with scarcely any respite. While some of the Heinkels were taking turns to drop their loads, others flew back to their base to get another load of explosive. We longed for darkness as the traveller in a desert yearns for a drop of water.

Yaroshenko paced the bridge incessantly. Hundreds of eyes followed him. He seemed omnipotent, god-like. But once, in the few seconds' interval between bombs, he winked his black eye at me and grinned broadly.

The Germans dropped 40 large bombs in all—on an average one every four minutes. Their aiming was good. At least ten of their bombs hit the place where we would have been but for Yaroshenko's skill. The last bomb dropped far to the left just as dusk fell. The moon rose. Quarter of an hour earlier we had had the pleasure of seeing a Heinkel crashing into the sea in a cloud of smoke against the rays of the setting sun.

The bombing was over, but the tension was not relieved. We were nearing Sevastopol. The moon was full, and the outline of our ship was clearly discernible in the bright light. When we were off Balaklava torpedo-cutters appeared to starboard.

The destroyer's guns opened fire. Manœuvring was difficult, for the torpedo was very hard to spot in the darkness. We waited, but there was no explosion. The ship continued full steam ahead.

* * * * *

The cutters were no longer in sight. At last a strip of rocky land came into view in the pale moonlight. I knew, of course, that the Sevastopol sector of the front was very narrow, but I confess that my heart sank within me when, from the sea, I realised just how narrow.

Constant flashes of gunfire traced the outlines of the fortress. They made a flaming arc. Searchlights probed the skies incessantly.

When we had dropped anchor and the throb of the engines had died down we could hear almost uninterrupted gunfire. The Sevastopol cannonade of June, 1942. Still Captain Yaroshenko did not leave the bridge. The battle was not over.

He had to enter the harbour and anchor at a spot where, before the war, any seaman would have counted it suicide to moor a ship like the *Tashkent*. He had to unload his cargo, disembark the Siberians. He had to take aboard the wounded and the women and children. And he had to do all this at such speed that he could be out of Sevastopol harbour before daybreak.

He was fully aware that the Germans would be waiting for his ship as soon as the sky lightened, that planes were waiting to take off. Well, he could deal with Heinkels. But dive-bombers?

He knew that no matter what route he took for the return trip, he was bound to be spotted. There was no avoiding an encounter, and the Germans had determined on a kill.

He stood watching the disembarkation and unloading. He watched lightly wounded men helping each other aboard, watched stretchers carrying gravely wounded men being carried up the gangway. He watched the mothers with their sleeping babies.

* * * * *

All this activity was conducted in the utmost quiet. No one spoke above a whisper. The ship discharged her cargo and loaded up again inside two hours.

Two thousand people came on board. Every single soul who stepped on deck in that moment raised his or her eyes to the bridge, seeking out the figure of Yaroshenko.

He knew only too well what it meant for a ship to go down. Not long before he had commanded a small ship which was sent to the bottom by enemy bombs. He had been seriously wounded.

He had saved his crew—but there were no passengers, no wounded, no women and children. He remained on the bridge, to the last and jumped into the sea just as the bridge began to submerge. Gripping his Party membership card in one hand and a revolver in the other, he decided he would shoot himself if there seemed no hope of rescue. But he was saved.

The ship sailed from Sevastopol at about 2 a.m. . . .

WOMEN IN BLUE SPECTACLES

By D. Stonov

THEY ARE ALL UNIFORMLY CLAD IN GREY OVERALLS, THEIR EYES COVERED WITH large blue spectacles. Perhaps that is why they all look alike. They stand at the benches with wise faces, each movement precisely calculated. The first thing that strikes your attention is the extreme mobility of their hands. Their long dexterous fingers seem to explore and listen to the pulse of the ringing metal.

An endless belt flows, strewn evenly with gleaming parts. A sure hand confidently selects the required part. I count the time. For exactly 15 seconds, no more, no less, the part is retained in the hand and receives the necessary manipulations. Then it is placed back on the belt and flows on to another pair of hands.

At last the belt slows down, the machines are stopped. This is the lunch hour. The women in blue spectacles all turn in one direction and pass between the two rows of machines. But how uncertain, timed and cautious are their steps.

Their hands, which you have just admired, grope helplessly along the narrow passage; their necks are outstretched and their faces concentrated, motionless. Not trusting themselves, they call to one another as people do in a dark, impenetrable forest.

At last they reach the cloakroom, and the portress, who also wears grey overalls and blue spectacles, hands each of them a thin metal rod. Then begins an uneven tapping on the stone steps of the staircase, as the rods probe a way for uncertain feet.

You are in a home for blind women. Every person in this five-storied building, from the superintendent to the charwomen, is sightless.

"Some of us lost our sight in childhood or youth, but the majority were born blind," superintendent Elizaveta Kashina informs us. "But all of us feel and know what the sunrise, the sunset, the moon, green woods, blue lakes, swift streams and country roads look like. Special books and magazines are published and lectures arranged for us. We walk in the park and listen to music.

"Thanks to our books, magazines and radio we all know about our vast country, about our new cities and new industrial plants, about the irrigated deserts and drained swamps. We also know what is going on all over the world.

We work, and do not know the meaning of empty, gloomy hours of enforced idleness."

"What exactly do you do?"

"Oh, various things," says Elizaveta Kashina. "To the best of our ability we help to adorn life and add to its conveniences. Next door to our house we used to have a shop where we sold things we made—crochet table-cloths, napkins, rugs, scarves, lamp shades, embroidered window-curtains, door hangings and shawls. But that's all over now."

"Since when?"

"Since the outbreak of war, since the terrible sinister force of destruction attacked our country. The Nazis want to deprive our two hundred million people of light. Only we blind people know what the horrors of darkness really mean. And Nazism would plunge us into a blacker darkness. Could we at such a time stand aloof and continue to crochet table-cloths and napkins, as if nothing had happened?—Believe me, the work simply dropped from our hands."

"And so you stopped crocheting?"

"Yes. We have discontinued it temporarily, for the duration of the war. We sent a delegation to the Blind Society, the organisation which looks after our affairs, and we told them firmly that we wanted to work for national defence, and only for national defence. Our desire was so strong that it overcame all difficulties—and they are countless.

"Our foreman was used to teaching apprentices who had the use of their eyes, and so he himself had to learn all over again. 'You see this machine,' he would begin, and then break off in embarrassment. Because we could not see the machines; we could only feel it.

"Here our senses of touch and hearing came to our aid, and they to some extent replace our sight. The machines had to be adapted for our use, since we might have got our hands caught between the cogs. New safety devices had to be fitted.

"I won't recount all the difficulties and obstacles. They are unimportant now. The important thing is that we blind women are working for national defence and are helping to strike the enemy. Our hatred is not sightless. We can see the battlefield. We are taking our share in the labour which is creating the sinews of war, and that fills us with pride.

"According to Hitler's theory we are inferior, worthless people, perhaps fit only to be annihilated. But this theory will be buried together with those who are trying to carry it into effect. Our land will be free and happy again, and in this land, as of old, an honourable place will be found for sightless folk. And for this place, together with our entire people, we shall fight until victory is won."

THE RECONQUERED THEATRE

By Lev Nikulin

ON THE EVENING OF 21ST JUNE, 1941, BORIS SHUMSKY WAS PLAYING IN SHAKESPEARE'S *Taming of the Shrew*. After the performance he washed off his make-up and changed his gold-braided jacket for ordinary clothes. Then he stepped out into the street—a cheerful, busy street. A Stalingrad street.

The next day Boris Shumsky, of the Stalingrad Drama Theatre, put on

military uniform, and for fifteen months tramped the long road of sorrow and glory from the western frontier back to the Volga, to Stalingrad, to the Stalingrad Drama Theatre.

But the audience is gone. The stalls have disappeared under debris of grey stone. Walls and roof have vanished. And actor Boris Shumsky is not posing elegantly on the stage in a gold-braided cloak. He is crouching down on charred boards behind a pile of wreckage.

Two blocks away is the actor's hostel, where he lived for two years before the war broke out. A bomb has shorn away half the structure. It crashed through the middle of actor Shumsky's old bed-sitting-room. From the street you can see its papered inner walls. A mirror still hangs against one of them, intact, only a little askew.

A week or so ago the Germans took the theatre building. Then they advanced along the street and stormed the upper floors of the hostel. The defenders hung on to the basement. After they had thrown the Nazis out of the top floors, it took them 36 hours of street fighting to win back the 200 yards separating the hostel from the theatre building.

There wasn't a street there any more. It was deep in debris. Thirty-six hours of blinding smoke, of nauseating stench from decomposing bodies. For thirty-six hours Senior-Lieutenant Boris Shumsky did not part with his tommy-gun, as with his unit he fought through the stench and the smoke to the theatre building.

It was a solid structure, with walls a yard thick—very good for defence. From the foyer windows three streets and a square could be kept under fire. The Germans hung on desperately, even while Soviet mortars were smashing away at the façade. The Red Army men brought up a tank right into the courtyard, and its cannon strengthened the bombardment.

At night a warm rain fell. The rising vapours, mingled with smoke, formed a screen. Behind its cover, Shumsky and his comrades crossed the street and reached a gap in the theatre wall.

Shumsky knew every corner of the building—priceless knowledge which led the Red Army men through the actors' entrance, so that they took the enemy from the rear.

He stood on the same stage where he used to play Petruchio. It looked like a charred hangar. A metal lace of girders hung above it. The dreadful glare of battle filled the sky overhead. The floor of the stage was half burned away.

Shumsky rushed through the familiar side passage to the main staircase, which was half blasted away, clambered up over the wreckage, and reached the upper lobby. Soviet tommy-gunners were attacking. There was a deafening noise of hand-grenades.

Through the smoke he saw German bodies lying slumped across window-sills and on the floor. The survivors made a rush for the gallery stairs. He fired a long burst, saw several running figures totter and crash motionless to the floor. Then he had an impression that the wall itself hit him in the right temple and he lost consciousness.

A day later he was evacuated in a ferry-ambulance across the Volga. He regained consciousness as they neared the farther shore. A nurse was bending over him, dressing his wounds.

"Who holds the theatre, nurse?" he whispered.

"We do, comrade."

THE SCHOOLMISTRESS FROM SEVASTOPOL

By O. Savich

ALEXANDRA FEDORINCHIK IS A SCHOOLMISTRESS. SHE HAS BEEN TEACHING FOR 37 years. Not so long ago she used to enumerate with pride her former pupils who had become professors, engineers and members of scientific expeditions. When I asked her who her favourite pupil was, she answered:

"Commander of the largest and most audacious guerilla detachment in the Crimea!"

Her answer is easy to understand: This guerilla is defending the professors and engineers and the school in which the schoolmistress teaches.

She arrived in Moscow only yesterday, but all her talk is of Sevastopol. Her first question was: "How soon shall I be able to get back?"

"Why are you so anxious to return to Sevastopol?"

She looks at me with surprise. "It's my city, and fighting is going on there."

She has four sons. The eldest is an anti-aircraft gunner, fighting near Kerch. The second is a colonel defending Leningrad. The third is a tank trooper on the Donetz front. The youngest—seventeen years of age—who was still at school when war broke out, went off and joined the guerillas and was wounded.

She has four sons, but she has far more children. She directs a welfare institute which combines a kindergarten for children of working women with a home for orphan children.

"You know," she says, "we have more applications from people who want to adopt war orphans than we have orphans. Would-be foster parents have to wait their turn."

She looks at me as though to say: "Now you know why I'm in such a hurry to get back to Sevastopol."

"How is life in the city?" I ask. "Quite normal. The trains are running. The shops are open. We live partly underground. We have our schools and factories there.

"People whose houses have been wrecked also live in special shelters. Each of these underground residences has its superintendent who sees that it is kept tidy and in order. Bombings have no terror for us now. Artillery bombardment, if it catches you in the street, is worse, but we are used to it. We are so busy there is no time to be afraid."

"What are our troops like?"

"One is always afraid for them."

"Why?"

"Because they themselves are afraid of nothing. When our Black Sea Marines go into attack, the Rumanians run at the mere sight of them. You know our city, so you know it cannot be captured. But, on the other hand, it isn't easy to relieve.

"We are waiting. For six months already we have been besieged. The big land, as we call the mainland from which we have been cut off, has not forgotten us. We keep in contact. I myself have several times accompanied the hospital ships which carry away our wounded. Our ships fire over our heads at the enemy besieging the city, and at such times we feel easy at heart.

"You know Sevastopol is perhaps the only town in the world where there isn't a single woman who is not working for defence. We have women in the fighting ranks. I could mention the names of women gunners, machine-gunners and snipers.

"Take the Tatar woman, Shura Tomir-Koy. Her husband was killed at the front. Her village was occupied by Germans. They carried off all the inhabitants, including her child. She herself was lying sick, and she was left, together with her eighty-year-old father. The Germans thought they would die anyhow. The father is now in hospital, and Shura—do you know how many wounded men she has carried from the battlefield? About a hundred.

"I could talk about our women endlessly. Have you heard about Anastasia Chaus? She lost an arm during the bombing. She didn't want to leave her machine—she is a die-operator. Her arm had to be amputated at the shoulder. She returned to her machine. Now with only one arm she fulfils her daily output four or five times over. There are over a hundred women's brigades in the city."

"What do they do?"

"They sew, knit, do repairs and laundry, and collect gifts for our soldiers. But we also build fortifications, clean streets, dig shelters, look after the wounded. There are children in my brigade—they collect money, linen and utensils for the army.

"Another member is an eighty-two-year-old schoolmistress. She is nearly blind, but she was offended when we told her it would be difficult for her to work. She sews, even though she cannot see, and sews as much as any young healthy woman.

"We went down an abandoned mine. That was when the enemy was very near, and we had to start an underground hospital. Amid mud and shaking planks we set up beds and installed the wounded. We cleared an aerodrome and built fortifications around it. We had to dig the ground, trample it down, and cover it with concrete.

"In my brigade there was a mother with seven children. She was killed on the aerodrome. I have taken charge of four of her children for the time being.

"My day begins at six in the morning. At seven I am at the reception station. Then I travel around the city. Things have to be collected, people have to be consulted and I have to see to my school. Sometimes I walk above ground, sometimes underground. Air raids are frequent, but there are plenty of shelters.

"Then I return to my children. I must always be there during their dinner. Then back to the city again. I am also head of my brigade, you know. I have to see that all have work to do, and there are sixty-one of them. And what sort of a head would I be if I didn't work myself?"

"And that's what you call normal life, and are so anxious to return to?"

"Of course. The city is beleaguered. It is surrounded, and it has only one thought—defence. That is quite normal. If it had been otherwise, I would have said that things were abnormal in Sevastopol."

She will soon return to her normal life.

WRITERS AND VEGETABLES

By Ovady Savich

"THERE WAS A LONG QUEUE IN THE MARKET TO-DAY," OUR DOMESTIC ASSISTANT told me recently. "I couldn't get a single thing."

"What was the queue for? Potatoes?" asked my wife.

"No, for flowers. The first spring narcissi. I did so want to bring some home."

Next day she was more successful. My writing table was adorned for several days with narcissi. Then she came home with a story of another long queue in the market. But this time it wasn't for flowers, but for seedlings.

When the offices close for the night, and the day shift leaves the factories, you can see thousands of Moscow people walking along the streets with spades in their hands. They aren't navvies or builders of fortifications, though in a very real sense they are doing civil defence work. These people are Moscow's allotment gardeners. They have been given small plots of land in the suburbs, or even in the city itself, on which to grow vegetables.

The snow still lay thick on the roofs, and not a single snowdrop had yet appeared in the fields, when the Writers' Union invited me to put my name down for its gardening section. I was rather taken aback. I knew the Union had a poets' section, a prose-writers' section, a translators' section and a critics' section, and that since the war a soldier-writers' section had been formed. But a gardening section!

However, I went along to see what was afoot. An elderly and rather well-known critic was fervently haranguing a group of attentive listeners. "Vegetable gardening," he said, "will develop your muscles. There is no finer recreation than the cultivation of the soil. Remember Leo Tolstoy and how he appealed to everyone to work in the fields. When the things you have sown begin to appear above the ground you will be as delighted as a child, and rejoice in every green shoot."

With less eloquence, and without literary references volunteers were conducting similar propaganda in every factory, office and apartment house. The Government said: "Help us to help you with food and supplies," and the City Soviet said: "Here's land, gardening tools and seed."

Soon the Writers' Union, the Musicians' Union, the Academy of Sciences, schools, munition works, knitted-goods factories, Government departments, invalids, co-operatives, police, firemen, house managements and individual citizens were putting in urgent applications for spades and seed.

Typists in Government offices were hammering away overtime at their machines, typing urgent requisitions to the City Soviet: "Please supply us with so many spades and so much seed for so many employees of our department." You would hear one typist asking another: "Are you going to plant cucumbers? I'm going in for lettuce."

A few hereditary city-dwellers, convinced that white rolls grew on trees, sceptically shrugged their shoulders. They were fiercely attacked by the enthusiasts: "Don't you know that everybody in London eats his own home-grown lettuce? We'll soon be eating our own early potatoes and you'll be gnashing your teeth with envy."

"No, we can't come to see you this Sunday," people would say to their

friends. "We'll be spending the day on our allotment. We don't get much time for it on week-days—only an occasional hour or so in the evenings."

Go into the courtyard of any block of flats (nearly all Moscow people are flat-dwellers) and you will find the ground broken up into small vegetable patches, old women carefully watering the plants from watering-cans.

Go into factory yards. There too you will find the land all dug up and the workers in the off-shift stooping over their plots while a night-watchman shows an engineer how to plant out seedlings.

Truck drivers drive their vehicles into the yard with infinite care, hugging the wall closely. They would not for the world bruise a single seedling.

Yesterday I ran into a writer who used to listen ironically last winter when an enthusiastic literary critic tried to persuade us to enrol in the gardening section of the Writers' Union. He was carrying a spade. "Yes, I've got a vegetable allotment," he said. "But don't think I work on it because Leo Tolstoy followed the plough. I'd like to write like Tolstoy, but you can't learn that on a vegetable patch.

"And I don't do it because my father was a peasant and lived in the country all his life. My profession is different from his. I do it because every blow with the spade is a blow at Hitler. Every potato or cabbage we grow ourselves is, in a manner of speaking, a cartridge. And that's why, as you see, I've got a manuscript in one hand and a spade in the other."

THE GUERILLA CAT

By O. Savich

THIS IS A STORY OF A HEROIC CAT, WHO FIRST OPERATED AS A GUERILLA IN THE ruins of a Soviet front-line town, and is now an honoured member of a regular Red Army unit.

A pound or so of sausage is involved, but only a churl would consider that this tarnishes the brilliance of her exploit.

The tide of battle had left the small town stranded in no man's land. It had been pounded to rubble by enemy artillery, and the German lines were only 400 yards away. All the inhabitants had left long ago. The dogs had disappeared. Even the mice had gone off to fend for themselves in the virgin Karelian forest. But not the cat. She remained.

Two Red Army signallers, Nikolai Kobzin and Pyotr Gridin, were looking for an observation post for their battery, and fixed on the ruined town as ideal. It commanded a full view of the enemy's positions. But the job was to maintain communications.

They rigged up telephone wires, but inside five minutes German shells and trench mortar bombs had wrecked them, and whatever information Nikolai and Pyotr managed to collect was useless to them, since they could not transmit it to their commander.

Under a hail of shrapnel and bomb splinters they tugged the drums of wire, repaired the lines and buried them under the rubble. All in vain. The Germans bombarded the place without a moment's pause.

The obvious thing to do was to lay the wires in a trench. But the soil of Karelia is rocky, and the job would have taken two signallers far too long. Nikolai gazed at his boots, deep in thought. Suddenly he noticed a manhole leading to a main. Why not run the wires through the pipes? Though the

water system had long ago been put out of action, most of the pipes were still intact.

To lift the manhole lid was the work of a second. "Are you looking for a bomb-proof shelter?" shouted Pyotr. "You wait. I've got an idea," replied the muffled voice of his comrade, who had jumped down the manhole.

But he soon climbed out, looking sad and disappointed. "The pipes are too narrow," he explained. "Only a mouse could get through. If only we could have managed it! If we could have run the wire through the pipes it would have been absolutely safe. But it just won't work."

"You say a mouse could get through? What about a cat?" asked Pyotr.

"Oh, a cat could get through. With her tail up, in fact. But where are you going to get a cat? And how are you going to make her crawl through that hole? Cats are independent creatures, you know."

Pyotr did not answer immediately. He was straining his memory. Last night, somewhere or other, he had heard the mewling of a cat. He had been surprised, for it was the only trace of life in the town.

By evening he had found the cat. Hungry and thin, with burning eyes. She had taken refuge in the cellar of a bombed house. It was not hard to tempt her out of her retreat with a bit of sausage.

Pyotr put her down on the ground. He bent to stroke her gently. She arched her back and purred amiably.

"Do give her a bit more sausage," said Nikolai.

"No," replied Pyotr, smiling.

Nikolai looked quite distressed. "The poor thing is starving. I insist that she has something more to eat."

"Later, later! All in good time!"

He was unwinding the end of the wire. Then, discoursing softly with the cat as he did so, he attached the end of the wire harness-like over her shoulders. Then he handed her to Nikolai.

"Carry her to the manhole and let her go along the pipe. I'll go to the next manhole and call her. I've got plenty of sausage. She'll come when she smells it!"

At first the cat seemed a little perplexed, but when she heard the voice of Pyotr, and smelt the sausage, she began to make her way along the pipe.

It took a good deal of wire, and a great deal of sausage. Once the cat tumbled into the mud, and all three had to stop while she put her fur to rights. But at last the job was done.

They packed up their tools, Pyotr picked up the cat in his arms, and back they went to Senior Lieutenant Zaitsev, the battery commander, to report.

They assured him that the telephone line was well and truly laid, and would be certain not to let the battery down. The commander listened attentively, tested the line, and then with perfect seriousness ordered:

"Have the cat put on the strength of the battery and issue her rations."

Then he allowed himself a smile. "What is her name?"

"I don't know. She's homeless—just a stray," said Pyotr, fondling her head.

"Well, she's your cat. You found her and gave her her military training. So you must give her a name."

Pyotr thought for a while. "Supposing we name her in honour of the English? Let us call her 'Miss'."

Everyone agreed. The cat purred approval. Escorted by Pyotr and Nikolai she went off to draw her first rations.

MOSCOW METRO DISCUSSES FRANCE

By O. Savich

IN THE METRO CARRIAGE THREE GIRLS SPOKE FRENCH. NOW AND THEN THEY stammered, and one would suggest to the other a missing word. Sometimes they made mistakes and one would correct the other.

The carriage was crowded. As usual nowadays in Moscow many of the passengers wore military uniform. There were many clerks. Several peasant women with bundles, bound for a railway station, anxiously inquired at every stop whether they had arrived at their destination.

One of the peasant women asked what language it was the girls were speaking. "It sounds nice," she remarked.

"It is a fine language indeed!" interjected a young commander. "Here I sit and listen and think what a pity it is I do not know it."

"What do you want to know it for?" I asked.

"I'd like to read Stendhal in the original. He's my favourite author, but I've read him only in Russian—not the language in which he wrote."

"There are languages we need more than French," remarked an elderly man with a brief case.

"All languages are needed," retorted the commander. "Depending on what one likes. You're students, aren't you?" he continued, turning to the girls. "I thought so. Have you read Stendhal? Do you happen to remember anything by heart? I should so much like to hear how it sounds in French. At the front I've often recalled how Julien Sorel pondered on death."

"Why did you choose French?" sullenly asked the man with the brief case.

"What do you mean—why?" one of the girls retorted, amazed. "To know it. Then we shall teach it to others or translate from it."

"Are there many such like you—French students?"

"Yes, many. A whole faculty in the Language Institute."

"Do you still think France is going to play a leading part in the world after she collapsed in three weeks? Now she is again being ruled by that horse-thief Laval, and you in Moscow study French—what for?"

"We like it," said one.

"Laval is not France," said the other.

"It is Hitler who desires that there should be no French culture," said the third.

"I was never in France," said the commander. "You know, the only Frenchmen I ever saw were the killed and war prisoners from Doriot's legion. It was this riff-raff we faced at the front. I was wounded by a German bullet, but it was fired by a Frenchman. Yet I never confuse France with those who betrayed her. The France which is with us and for us is Balzac, Stendhal, Pasteur and Jeanne d'Arc."

"All these are fine words," remarked the man with the brief case; "but the fact is that the French surrendered their liberty cheaply and are now patiently accepting their disgrace. Others will give France back her freedom, but none can restore her importance in world affairs. You girls seem to be studying an unnecessary language."

"They never surrendered their liberty!" exclaimed the commander. "They

were betrayed. You apparently do not read the papers. You don't know how the French suffer!"

"Unnecessary language!" said one of the girls almost contemptuously. "Perhaps you think the past has no heirs or that in two years such a nation can be strangled. Don't you know there are Free Frenchmen whom all other true Frenchmen are anxious to join?"

"Or perhaps you don't know that every day Frenchmen are dying for France," said the other girl.

The next stop was the railway station and the peasant women became busy.

"I can't understand your argument," said one of them. "When we have beaten Hitler life everywhere will be better than before. In France, too. And all will live in friendship. This means we shall have to understand each other. So you go on and learn, girls. Don't listen to what other people say."

Then the man with the brief case laughed and said in French to the girls: "I lived in France and love her almost as my own country. I only tried to find out whether you girls loved her, too. And I have learned more than I expected."

It is hardly necessary to add that the man with the brief case was the author of this article.

The commander exclaimed: "I knew all along that you were pretending. I don't know the language, but one understands good words in any language."

THE SECRET SOVIET

By Ovady Savich

A LONE RED ARMY MAN CRAWLED CAUTIOUSLY ON TO THE ROAD. THE DAY WAS very still. Not a leaf moved to warn him that he was being watched. No wonder he was startled when he heard an agitated whisper: "Don't show yourself! There are Germans in our village."

Sitting motionless in the ditch by the roadside were a boy and a girl. They stared wide-eyed at the newcomer. Then they began speaking in excited whispers, constantly interrupting each other.

"We were sent by Sergei Mitrofanich, the chairman of our Soviet. He said that if we found any of our people we were to tell them that the Germans were in the village. If we met Germans we were to say that Ma had sent us to gather some firewood. He said if we met any Red Army men, we had to tell them that if they needed any food, they were to wait over there in that glade at night. Shall we bring you some bread and milk?"

That night Captain Tarasov took his men to the glade. Two peasant women and an elderly man brought the promised food.

"So you're working your way to the front line?" the man asked. "I thought that must be so, when the kids told me they'd met a Red Army man."

"Who are you?" the captain asked. "Aren't you afraid of the Germans finding out what you're doing?"

"I am the chairman of the village Soviet," the elderly peasant answered. He seemed to think there was nothing more to be said.

"Have you still got a Soviet?" one of the men asked in amazement.

"Of course. Our office is shut, naturally, but we keep the Soviet going just the same."

Even the captain looked incredulous. "But how do you manage, with the Germans in the village?"

"Well, we talked things over when the Germans were nearing our village. We decided to keep the village Soviet going secretly. We told the peasants to come for advice to me and the other members.

"Yes, our people have stuck to their Soviet all right. The moment the Germans came they began looking for the chairman. They pestered the women to say where I was, but the women said I'd run away.

"Then they wanted to know where my cottage was, but the women directed them to a deserted farm. The Germans began hunting for someone who would act as village elder, and finally picked on old Ivan Akinfiev. I told him to pretend he was sick, and come to me when he needed advice.

"As soon as the Germans arrived, they demanded grain and potatoes. I told Ivan to hand over part of the stocks remaining in the village—but the bulk of the foodstuffs were safely hidden in the forest.

"The Germans made a thorough house-to-house search, but could not lay their hands on any more grain. They stole anything they fancied.

"The fascists cursed old Ivan, but he told them he was sick and asked to be relieved of his job. But they thought he was meek and submissive, and wouldn't let him resign!

"The next thing the Germans wanted was meat," the old man went on. "But we diddled them again. The cattle were grazing in the field, but the very afternoon we were told to round them up, there were two rifle shots. The cowman came running into the village shouting that he had been attacked by guerillas, who had driven the cattle off."

"It seems that you manage to get along quite nicely with the Germans," the Captain remarked, a little caustically.

"Say, young fellow, why don't you wait till you hear the end of the story," said the old man reprovingly. "We don't get along as nicely as you might think. They hanged that poor cowman of ours. They quite believed that the guerillas had taken the cattle—they are scared out of their wits of the guerillas—but they thought the cowman was in with the guerillas. They beat him to try and make him say where the guerillas were hiding. He didn't say a word.

"Of course, there really weren't any guerillas. Some of the village people had fired two rifles we had hidden, and then driven the cattle off to the forest. Believe me, we'd all join the guerillas if we had half a chance." The old man looked pensive. "Maybe we'll start a detachment of our own."

Then he began to urge the Red Army men to push off. "It isn't too safe for you. Tanya here will show you the path through the woods to the next village."

Captain Tarasov and his men eventually made their way to the Red Army lines. Three months after this incident his regimental headquarters made contact with a new guerilla detachment. It was led by that very same Mitrofanich, chairman of the village Soviet.

THE HUNTER FROM DAGHESTAN

By O. Savich

MAHOMET HASIEV WAS GIVEN A RIFLE. THE SERGEANT BEGAN TO EXPLAIN ITS workings. Hasiev listened attentively. But when the sergeant asked him to repeat what had been said, he kept silent.

"Don't you know Russian?" asked the sergeant.

"I know it," answered Hasiev, "but I am unaccustomed to speak."

"Did you understand what I explained to you?"

"I don't need to understand—I know."

The sergeant stared at this strange pupil. "Have you got a matchbox?" Hasiev asked. "Give it to me."

He put the box on a tree-stump, measured off a distance of a hundred yards, took aim, and fired. The bullet pierced the very middle of the box.

"I'm a hunter," explained Hasiev. "I come from the Daghestan mountains. I could shoot when I was in my cradle. Still, please do teach me all the same, because Hitler isn't a mountain goat, and it's Hitler I want to hit this time."

"Someone else will have to teach you," said the sergeant with respect. "I couldn't hit a matchbox at a hundred yards."

Hasiev was right. War is not the same as hunting mountain goats. He had a lot to learn. All his life he had shot animals, but he had never suspected that there was a science of ballistics. Experience had taught him since childhood that when shooting over a long distance one must aim much higher than a straight line, but he had not known that there was an exact calculation, scientifically established.

He had also known that when aiming at a moving target one had to shoot slightly sideways, judging where the target would have got to during the fraction of a second the bullet took in flight. But he had not known that this was called a deflection, and that science had calculated this also to a nicety.

He found himself at the northern front. Everything was different from home—bare cliffs instead of tall mountains, quiet lakes and marshes instead of violent torrents. The sun gave little warmth, though in summer it never set.

He was the only Caucasian in his company. A cheerful young Byelorussian lieutenant taught him ballistics. The lieutenant liked to fire unexpected questions at him. Once he asked, "Tell me, Mahomet, why you hate Hitler. The Germans will never get to your Daghestan, and if they do get there they will not venture into the mountains."

Hasiev grew quite pale with excitement and anger. "They have come into your village, and you are a brother of mine," he said vehemently. "We of Daghestan have never been slaves. But when Daghestan was alone it was a poor country. Daghestan is now part of a family—a rich family, and Daghestan, too, is rich. Why am I a hunter? Because hunting is freedom. I want to study and know things. Now you are teaching me. The Soviets teach me. Hitler will not teach me."

It was his eighth month in the army and the first time he had ever made such a long speech.

He became a sniper, of course. He would find himself a spot far in the advance lines and lie down among the cliffs. Mist veiled the grey distance. But now he had eyes not only for the mountain goat, but also for the beast in field-grey uniform.

The lieutenant wondered why Hasiev was always so taciturn and reserved. "All of us here like you, Mahomet," he said, "and all respect you. When you killed your 100th German the entire company celebrated the event."

Hasiev lowered his eyes. "Mine is a firm arm," he replied. "It is my arm the comrades like. Mine is a sure eye—it is my eye the comrades like. But mine is a small foolish heart. Why should they like my heart?"

The hill from which the Germans kept our positions under fire had to be

taken in hand-to-hand fighting, for our artillery could not smash the cliffs. Hasiev crawled in front like a lizard. The lieutenant lost sight of him.

They were making for a German dugout. The lieutenant reached it first, flung several grenades, leaped up and dashed inside. A German officer aimed a revolver, but before he could pull the trigger Hasiev sprang up alongside and bayoneted him.

As soon as the Red Army men had dug in, the Germans counter-attacked. Hasiev took up a position in front of all the others. After a little, the Germans opened trench-mortar fire and Hasiev was wounded in both arms. The lieutenant crawled over to him.

"You must leave me," said Hasiev. "Just say good-bye and go away." The lieutenant spread a tarpaulin mantle, placed Hasiev carefully on it and crawled off, dragging the wounded man after him.

"My arms cannot hold a weapon any more," said Hasiev. "Just say good-bye and go away."

The lieutenant said nothing. Panting, he dragged his comrade along. When they had got to a dugout he said to Hasiev: "You are my brother, Mahomet. You yourself told me so, and it is true. One doesn't leave a brother in the lurch. You also said that people liked you only for your firm arm and sure eye, but not for your heart. That is not true."

A group of Red Army men stood around, all anxious to do something for the wounded sniper. He smiled at them with tears in his eyes.

"Brothers," he whispered. "Never before had Mahomet any family."

THE PURPLE-NOSED COBBLER

By Nikolai Moskvina

A FEW DAYS AGO I WAS IN A LITTLE FRONT-LINE TOWN WHEN A SMALL RED ARMY unit passed through. Everyone stopped to make way for these men, and looked understandingly at their weather-beaten faces and heavy, dusty boots.

They came to a halt in the central square, stacked their rifles and slumped down with tired relief on the green-painted benches under the trees.

On one side of the square there was a shop with a sign: "Model Boot and Shoe Makers." It was just about lunch time. A bespectacled man with a short beard came out, secured the door with a huge padlock, and hung up a notice: "Closed for lunch from one till two."

Just then a Red Army man strolled across to him and showed him a heel that was coming off his boot. The spectacled man looked at it commiseratingly, unlocked the door again and went in.

The news went round the square in no time. "Vinkov's having his boots mended." Soon every man was hauling off his boots and looking speculatively towards the open door of the shoemaker's shop. Here were burst seams that needed a few stitches, soles that wanted a few nails, worn-down heels, nails sticking up through the inner sole and tormenting the feet.

Soon the shop was full. The bootmakers—three men and one woman—had tied on their aprons again and were seated on low stools, hammering and stitching away for dear life. The spectacled man, who was head of the workshop, warned the Red Army men:

"We're glad to help you, comrades; but I'm sure I don't know whether it will do or not. You see, we only repair model shoes here—this kind." And

he pointed to neat rows of small, elegant women's slippers ranged on the shelves. "We're used to handling dainty goods and we've only got tools suitable for that kind of thing; but we can only do our best for you."

"That's right; we'll do our best for you," the woman echoed, setting an enormous heavy army boot sole upwards before her. At this point the commander intervened: "All this is very well, but we're taking up the whole of your dinner hour." But the shoemakers shrugged away his protests.

It got very close in the crowded shop, so the head bootmaker had the stools and lasts carried out into the shady, grass-grown yard. Then the shoemakers' forces were suddenly augmented. Several Red Army men who had worked at the trade before the war turned up, sat down and set to work.

Then two rough-and-ready cobblers who specialised in "repairs while you wait" in the market-place rolled along and offered to help. One of them, a purple-nosed fellow, had a proper scorn for the "model shoemakers' " efforts.

"What do they know about this kind of cobbling?" he asked pityingly. "It's our sort of job, not theirs. They just hold things together with bits of thread and pegs; but if we knock a nail in, my lads, we knock it in so it will last till you get to Berlin."

The yard was full of men now, some sitting on piles of logs, some lying on the grass in the shade. The Red Army men enjoyed the feel of the cool grass on their bare feet as they waited for their boots.

When the job was done, and the unit had to move on, the commander went to the cobblers and asked what he owed them for the work; but they wouldn't hear of payment for such a trifle, they said.

The purple-nosed cobbler even took offence. "What do you mean? Perhaps you think I hurried down two streets to get here just to make a bit of money? Do you think I'm short of work, eh, young man? Why, I've more than I can get through in the market."

They watched the unit cross the square and out of the village, their eyes fastened on the ranks of moving feet. Then the purple-nosed man took himself off, back to the market. "Tried to pay me, indeed!" he muttered. "They can pay me when they come back from Berlin!"

THE LAST KOPEK

By S. Marich

THE OFFENCE COMMITTED BY THE OLD PEASANT WOMAN, MARIA IVANOVNA, resident of a German-occupied village in the Voronezh district, Kalinin region, was failing to bow when a German officer passed by. She was immediately arrested and two mounted soldiers took her to the commandant's office, nine miles away. Soldiers on horseback laughed, joked and smoked pipes while Maria Ivanovna had to keep pace with them afoot.

At last they reached the commandant's office. The commandant was having dinner and she had to wait. When dinner was over the commandant rested to settle his heavy meal. Then they brought him a plate of berries.

At last the commandant came out and pronounced the sentence. "For failing to show proper respect to a German officer we must inflict a severe, very severe penalty. But I am a good-hearted man. Since you are a poor woman you will just pay a ten kopeks fine.

"But that isn't all," added the commandant. "To-morrow at nine o'clock

in the morning sharp you will pay the first kopek. After that you will come here every day at nine a.m. sharp and pay one kopek until you have paid the entire sum. If you are one minute late you and your entire family will be severely punished. Now, march!"

Every evening Maria Ivanovna left the house in order to be on time at the commandant's office in the morning. She was a weak woman and could hardly walk. Bread had long since been eaten up in all the villages in the neighbourhood. The sole food left was bran, but not everybody could afford even that. Villages teemed with beggars; many had died of starvation.

Maria Ivanovna walked through the fields and her heart ached with grief. The earth lay unploughed and unsown. Only here and there last year's ear of grain shook in the wind and cornflowers blossomed.

Every morning the commandant summoned soldiers to witness the scene. The clerk accepted the kopek and issued a receipt while soldiers joked and jeered. The commandant said: "You are very punctual. Let's see—how many miles have you covered by now? You still owe seven kopeks . . . six kopeks . . . five kopeks . . . how many miles would that make?" And so every day.

The woman kept silent. She had a sick old man at home and children.

People in the village knew her story. "The scoundrels," commented neighbours, "not only are they taking away our possessions but they must mock us like this!"

"Never mind, Maria Ivanovna," said the old blacksmith. "The Germans will pay yet with blood for your kopeks. We've got a long account to settle with them, and these kopeks aren't the least part of it."

Nine kopeks had been paid. Maria Ivanovna had already walked nearly one hundred and eighty miles to pay them. Now she was en route to pay the last kopek. This time, at the entrance to the village where the commandant's office was situated, she was rudely stopped by the German patrol who kept watch there instead of the usual solitary sentry. "Where are you going?" she was asked gruffly. "I am paying a fine." "Ah that. . . . All right, go ahead."

But before they let her proceed they searched her. Maria Ivanovna noticed that some changes had taken place in the village since yesterday. Half of the house where the commandant lived was wrecked. Soldiers scurried hither and thither. Some new officer kept shouting at them. He also shouted at Maria Ivanovna.

"What do you want here?" "I've come to pay the fine." "What fine?"

The commandant's clerk whispered something into the officer's ear. Maria Ivanovna meanwhile looked around and realised what had happened. The old blacksmith had been right. During the night the guerillas had paid a visit here.

"I must see the commandant in person," she said. "He himself accepts the fine."

"Go away, get out of here," said the officer, and turned away in disgust when she proffered him the kopek.

Maria Ivanovna placed the kopek on the porch and withdrew some distance. Then she saw soldiers carrying out a coffin containing the body of the commandant. Guerillas had killed him during the night.

UNCLE ALYOSHA'S ACADEMY

By Fetisov

I SIT IN THE GUERILLA CAMP AND LISTEN TO THE CONVERSATION. UNCLE ALYOSHA, their broad-shouldered, grey-haired commander, is giving a lecture on the tactics of guerilla warfare.

"Well, my friends," he says, "you will see for yourselves: a coward will never succeed—never! Remember, our strength lies in daring and sudden action. You lie in ambush, waiting for the Germans.

"If, because there are many of them, you run off and sit behind a tree like a rabbit, you have disgraced your unit, deceived your comrades and done no harm to the enemy. And nobody will ever mention your name.

"But if you lie in ambush and hold your ground—ah! there's a different matter. The Germans are coming nearer and nearer—20 yards from you; then 15 yards; then 10. But you are not a coward. You press your rifle to your shoulder when the Germans are at your very nose and take them by surprise. They have not even time to take aim before you have shot down a good many of them.

"Then, my friends, you have done a job. Your comrades respect you and your name becomes famous. Is it clear?"

"As clear as daylight!" answer the men.

"Well, that's enough about the theory of guerilla fighting," says the commander. "Now we will proceed with practical lessons."

Uncle Alyosha, the commander of this detachment, was famous in the Siberian forests 20 years ago, when he led guerilla units against immensely superior numbers of White Guards. Everybody in Siberia has heard of him.

In spite of his 55 years, he has gone back to his old trade. He not only organises partisan detachments, but has set up a kind of guerilla "university" for the men. At this university he delivers lectures in his own peculiar, vivid style and himself gives the practical instruction.

He takes his students out on patrol. The detachment is near a road. Uncle Alyosha warns them not to start firing until he shoots. A cart full of Germans appears on the road and passes within 20 yards. Uncle Alyosha does not stir.

More Germans pass. Still Uncle Alyosha does not act. It grows dark. Then a German cavalry detachment appears. Then Uncle Alyosha gives the signal. The guerillas open fire, killing 11 German cavalymen. The rest turn tail. Uncle Alyosha is pleased with his students' progress.

They have learnt a lot in a few days: how to move quickly from place to place; how to cut communications; how to throw grenades and fire-bottles; how to lay mines.

Uncle Alyosha has plenty of good stories about the old days—amusing and instructive stories. Not long ago he was entertaining his students with an account of an incident that happened in the Far East.

"One hundred and fifty Whites stopped in a nearby village," he began. "They fortified the road. The village itself was surrounded by a swamp. The White commander thought it would be beyond the power of the devil himself to pass through that swamp or break through his defences.

"But we knew a path through that 'impassable' swamp. A small group of us broke into the village and went for the Whites. The commander took to

his heels while we killed off his men. We took all their horses; then we went off to settle accounts with him."

The next day one of the guerillas came to Uncle Alyosha and said: "A hundred German soldiers are in the village of N. Can't we repeat your Far East operation and break in on them through the forest?" Uncle Alyosha's face lit up: "Excellent! Excellent if it comes off!"

And it did come off. The guerillas broke into the village, smashed up the German unit with grenades and fire bottles, and disappeared as swiftly as they had come.

Uncle Alyosha wears the Order of the Red Banner for guerilla fighting in the Far East and the Order of Lenin for fighting against the German invaders.

WHAT AM I FIGHTING FOR?

By Red Army Man A. Y. Andreyev

(This letter from a Soviet soldier to his friend was published in the Soviet press)

DEAR GREGORY,

At last my wounds have healed and I am returning to the front. I'm on the night train from Moscow, westward bound. I've been turning things over in my mind. Why am I fighting? And what am I fighting for?

Three hours ago I kissed a girl's misty eyes. Then I pressed my lips to one of the cold marble columns of the subway, and when I got outside I picked up a bit of asphalt in the station yard and put it in my pocket. You'll call it sentimental nonsense. But it's my heart aching for my beloved Moscow.

When the Germans were closing in on the city on three sides I went to the front without thinking twice. My one idea was to protect with my life the small piece of Soviet territory that is Moscow, which to me stands for everything—home, country, love. It's for Moscow's sake I am going once more to the front.

Remember, Gregory, how before we left school, just before the war, we were planning a trip down south? Remember how all of us pored over maps and finally decided on a river trip down the Volga, to be followed by visits to the Kerch catacombs, the Sevastopol panorama, and old Kiev? But the Germans came. They not only did us out of our holiday. They wrecked the cities we were going to visit.

We had to board tanks and planes instead of the river steamer, and we started out on a trip longer than any cruise down the Volga. I know very well that our generation is called upon to shoulder the heaviest burden ever known in history. You need shoulders of steel if you are not to give way. Still, we'll hold out.

A guerilla told me how a mother died. She was a middle-aged woman. Two soldiers dragged her in front of an officer. With a cold, contemptuous look the young German asked: "Where's your son?"

"My son is with those who will come to kill you," the woman replied proudly.

The officer slowly unsheathed his sabre, swung it, and then, working himself up into a fury, decapitated her. The mother's head fell to the ground and lay there for a long time in the dust.

When I was out scouting I saw a boy of four or five years old standing by the roadside. In a ditch alongside lay a wounded young woman, apparently his mother. Then some German tanks came roaring and clattering down the road.

I don't know what instinct made the boy raise his hands, whether it was fear or the desire to live, but there he stood with raised hands by the side of his wounded mother, surrendering to the mercy of the "conquerors." The heavy machines passed by. Then suddenly one tank veered sharply to the side and crushed the child under the caterpillars.

Since then, whenever I go into battle I see in my mind's eye that little boy with upraised hands, and hear him crying for revenge. All the torture, the mockery, the humiliation—has it all been avenged? Not yet! To avenge our people's tears, their tortures, their mocked love—that is why we are going into this mortal bitter battle of extermination.

At times like these the painful thought of death begins to torment the brain. Well, there are only two choices—you can die on the battlefield and yet live on, like Nikolai Shchors or the sailor Zheleznyak (guerillas of the Civil War, heroes of popular songs in the U.S.S.R.), Nikolai Ostrovsky (the blind author of "How Steel Was Tempered") and Captain Gastello. Or you can desert the battlefield and skulk in the brushwood, survive physically and yet die to the world, become a coward and a scoundrel.

We vote for Shchors! There is not and cannot be any other way. For victory! For new joyful meetings with friends—that's what I'm fighting for.

I never had a chance to see Stalin at close range, only at demonstrations, when we saw him a long way off, standing on the tribune, looking just like he does in his portraits. Do you remember, Gregory, how whenever we went for a walk on spring evenings we always turned towards the Red Square, and longed to look beyond the brick Kremlin wall, to see Stalin? Somehow we always pictured him at his desk bent over books, papers and maps.

We used to stand for hours on the vast deserted square, and it seemed to us that through the thick brick wall we felt the throbbing heart of this man. We felt his presence in our midst. And wherever I was I always had the feeling that he was with me. It is for Stalin that I go into mortal combat.

Since time began, youth has always been mankind's hope, flower and pride. But the German youth is a misfortune for society, and a disgrace to the world. Reared in Germany's animal cages, tamed like beasts with a piece of bloody meat, corrupted by Hitler, this youth deprived of youth is only capable of plunder and murder.

Soviet youth has accepted the challenge, whatever the price may be. And it is to carry out this task that I go into battle.

MY DAUGHTER ZOYA

By Lyubov Kosmodemyanskaya

In the early months of the war, when the Germans' general offensive on the Soviet capital was at its height, an 18-year-old Moscow schoolgirl, known to her friends as Tanya, joined a guerilla detachment. At the beginning of December, 1941, after taking part in many operations behind the enemy lines, she was caught by the Germans and sentenced to death.

They led her to the gallows in the village square, to be publicly hanged. The

village people wept. *She cried out: "Why are you so gloomy? Do not lose heart . . . I am not afraid to die. It is happiness to die for my people."*

Her body lies in a common grave in the village of Petrishchevo, in the Vereisky district. She was posthumously named a Hero of the Soviet Union.

The following account of the life of "Tanya" (Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya) was written by her mother, a school teacher.

IN THE NORTH OF THE TAMBOV REGION OF THE SOVIET UNION IS A LITTLE VILLAGE called Aspen Grove. The old folks say that long, long ago, deep forests covered the whole district, which is now a stretch of rye, oat and millet fields.

Before the Revolution, Aspen Grove had about 5,000 inhabitants—quite a large-sized place whose market on Fridays was frequented by peasants from all over the countryside. In the off-seasons many of the villagers used to go to Moscow or Penza to earn some money in the factories. On their return they would be dressed in city style. I remember how their new boots creaked as they sauntered through the village square or knelt down at mass. And so the people of Aspen Grove were not reckoned as plain folk, but as people who had seen the world.

After the Revolution the village made rapid strides. Its two schools increased to ten. Young Pioneers in flaming red kerchiefs began to parade under the willows. Life became brighter for all of us.

I well recall the placid autumn day of 1923 when Zoya was born. She was the first girl to grace our family after a number of boys. Everybody in the house fondled and petted her. She was out darling. When her brother Shura came into the world we already considered her a big girl, though she was not yet quite two. I got her used at an early age to be handy around the house.

When she was six years old we moved to the Siberian city of Kansk, in the Yenisei Territory. We were assigned work in the district of Shytkino. I remember a terrible day when we lost her. I searched the city high and low for her, but could not find her anywhere. Then my husband went to look for her. I was in tears.

At last I saw my husband and Zoya walking down the street. She had gone to the market, bought some chewing gum, and wandered further.

She was not at all afraid in this strange city, among strange people. She had strayed towards the woods, but had forgotten the road back to the hotel. She was taken to a militia station. When my husband arrived she was feeling quite at home, serenely drinking tea.

In the village where we now settled down there were still a number of kulaks, and Zoya was greatly puzzled how one man could own so many horses and cows, a hundred sheep, and a house ever so big. Why did he need so much?

She grew up in the lap of nature. We loved to go picking raspberries in the woods, but armed men had to accompany us, because bears also like raspberries. Bird cherries ripened there in summer, and in damp places whortleberries grew. The Siberians dry the bird cherries, grind them at the mill, and make excellent tea cakes from the sweet brown flour. Every cottage has its tubfuls of berries and mushrooms put by for the winter. The river boats return laden to the brim with fish.

Nothing could keep Zoya away from the river and the woods. Far from frightening her, the fact that you might meet a bear quite enticed her. Age-old cedars, larches, silver firs and pine trees grew densely in the profound silence, where wild bears, huge wolves and elks with palmated antlers made their habitation.

She loved the swift, wide river. Its current made you giddy to watch it. In October the river would freeze up and it remained icebound till May. The first few warm days would see the population astir to prepare against floods. The melting ice and snow were a real menace thereabouts. The spring floods sometimes washed away houses and herds, and submerged whole villages for several days, compelling the people to take to the hills.

Zoya loved songs. Here in Siberia partisan songs had been popular ever since the Civil War, and of these Zoya was particularly fond. She often went to the pictures. What attracted her most was not the films, but the community singing before the show.

They really did sing well, with emotion, in a sad, melodious strain. I cannot just now recall all the words of her favourite song, but its tune and concluding words have clung to my memory. They were—"*and then the young partisan died.*"

The year 1930 gave birth to a new, a collective farm countryside. Kulakdom was on its last legs. In our village and in many others these rich peasants viciously opposed collectivisation. They organised gangs to offer concerted resistance, and at the first opportunity revenged themselves on active supporters of collectivisation.

I remember a time when seven coffins containing the dead bodies of collectivisation enthusiasts were brought to our district. A band had been ordered from Taishet to play at the funeral. Covered with wreaths brought by friends and relatives and accompanied by the band's sad strains, the red-draped coffins were carried from the building in which they had lain in state. Many of the mourners were in tears. No one in that cortege and no one who saw it pass was likely ever to forget it.

A burial vault had been made in the village square, facing the premises of the District Executive Committee. They built an enclosure around the memorial and placed a few benches on the ground. Children were the most frequent visitors to the grave. Returning from the woods with flowers they had picked, they would sit on the benches winding wreaths, which they would reverently place on the tomb.

Sometimes Zoya would climb up on one of the benches, and, as if speaking from a platform, would hold forth in the manner of her elders. Then the youngsters would shoot off their toy pistols in an imitation salute, and sing partisan songs as they wended their way home. Our house was full of singing.

A year had elapsed since we left Siberia. I was teaching at a school attached to the Timiryazev Agricultural Academy, on the outskirts of Moscow. Most of the pupils were children of the Academy students. I had Zoya and Shura transferred to this school. They were then eight and six years old respectively.

Zoya had had scarlet fever very badly, and during her prolonged illness had been out of contact with girls and boys of her own age. Her grandparents were virtually the only people at her bedside. Susceptible and imitative, she acquired many a turn of speech from her adult companions and adopted even their way of arguing.

Once Zoya noticed some youngsters smoking. She chided them severely, falling into the same didactic tone that her grandmother, Mavra Mikhailovna, employed. "Little boys must not smoke. Before you know it you'll start a fire and cause no end of mischief."

Another time she read her neighbour's little girl a lecture: "Paranya, why do you talk as if you came from that hick-town Ryazan? Listen carefully how others speak, and you will get the correct pronunciation soon enough."

Before long Zoya joined the Young Pioneers. She was then at an age when children grow and develop rapidly and when these traits of character that will cling to them in adult life begin to show themselves and take firm root.

From the very beginning she considered her membership in the Pioneers (and later in the Young Communist League) a matter of great honour and distinction. Their first precept, to be truthful, she took most seriously. She could not stand fibbers or braggarts.

As always, she was the leader in all the children's games and looked up to as head of the class. Her playmates would come to her to settle their quarrels, and if they were noisy and would not listen she would get up on a chair, reprimand them and then patiently and persistently repeat what she had proposed.

Zoya was good at her studies. She always prepared her lessons conscientiously. Her school-books and copy-books were always neat and clean, with never a single spot. Both my husband and I were working, so that Zoya sometimes had to do the shopping and prepare dinner for all of us.

She joined the Young Communist League in October, 1938—a red letter day for her. She took this event very seriously. She did much political reading and carefully studied the Y.C.L. constitution to qualify for membership.

She was doing much social work at school, but this sphere of activity seemed too small for her. So she began to teach the three R's to a neighbour who had a small baby to look after. Then she challenged her Y.C.L. classmates to teach semi-illiterate people. She applied herself to this job with passionate devotion and with all the seriousness of an adult. She drew up a curriculum and borrowed books on teaching methods from me. At the close of the school year her pupil was able to read and write.

In 1933 my husband died. I left for work in the morning and returned late in the evening. All the housework had to be done by Zoya. She got dinner ready, kept the stove going, scrubbed the floors, did the shopping and all the rest.

Her brother Shura was a capable child. His hobbies were applied mechanics and painting. But he relied too much on his innate faculties and did his lessons in a slovenly way. He would often get only "Fair," which worried Zoya much more than him.

"Studying's your job now, do you understand?" she once told Shura. "You have no right to fall down on your job."

Shura scowled at her.

"What if I did get 'Fair'? Do you really suppose you're smarter than me?"

"If you are able to do better, you've got to show me. Here, take this book, for instance. You simply turned its pages and then chucked it aside. That's no way. If you start a thing, finish it. Then you can say you know something about it."

Now that Zoya is no longer with us, as I recall what she did and what she said, and every small thing about her, I can judge my daughter's character better than when she was alive. There was a certain oneness about her.

While still a child I taught her never to refuse to do small things, because, as Lenin said, big things are made of small things.

She always remembered that. And the following precept of Stalin's remained firmly fixed in her mind: "In our country work has become a matter of honour, a matter of glory, a matter of valour and heroism."

She grew up on these principles.

She made the following entry in her diary:

"Keep your self-respect, but don't think too much of yourself or shut your-

self up in your shell like a clam: don't be biased; don't shout that nobody appreciates you or has any respect for you. Improve your mind, and self-confidence will increase accordingly.

One more dictum made a profound impression on her: "Perseverance and courage are the product of obstacles surmounted." She never gave way to despair, never abandoned any task.

For instance, arithmetic came hard to her. Shura would sometimes help her out. But more often than not she refused his help, saying: "I'll work it out myself."

Years went by. The child grew to full girlhood. She decided that she had no head for figures, that she would never make an engineer, as had been suggested. So she decided to pick her own vocation, that of a teacher of literature, but only as a stepping-stone to higher spheres, for she aspired to become a writer.

To be sure, she never breathed a word about this to anyone. Literature had always had a great fascination for her. How she was carried away by such authors as Pushkin, Tolstoy, Gorky, Nekrassov and Chernyshevsky as well as our late contemporary, Nikolai Ostrovsky! Their works and their lives taught her the lesson of fortitude and perseverance.

She dearly loved her country and its people. I noticed that she was becoming more and more interested in the history of the Soviet nations. She became very fond of Russian folksongs and epic narratives. In the eighth grade she wrote an essay entitled "Ilya Muromets, Hero of the Land of the Russians." In her school they still consider this the best composition ever handed in.

In a way Zoya was rather reserved. She did not like to discuss her own personality and emotions. She had few intimate girl friends. At one time she and Nastya, a girl neighbour, were closely attached to each other. Nastya was the younger of the two. I remember how they used to go bathing together in a pond or pick flowers in the fields. Zoya was very fond of flowers. Sometimes they would do embroidery together.

Yet by nature Zoya was a lively, sociable girl. I know that she frequently suffered for the lack of a great, real, all-consuming friendship. She liked to make merry and was fond of laughter, music and the theatre. "Mother, don't ever turn down any tickets," she would say to me. "If you won't go, I will."

While in the ninth grade Zoya went down with meningitis. She was taken to the Botkin hospital in Moscow. For many a long day and night our only thought was whether she would survive this dreadful disease or not. Prof. Morgulis snatched her from the jaws of death. Everybody at the hospital was very fond of her. As soon as she felt better she asked me to bring her some books. Prof. Morgulis faithfully brought her his own newspapers.

She recuperated in a sanatorium at Sokolniki, on the outskirts of Moscow. There she made friends with some distinguished and interesting people, in whose company I always found her when I went to see her. They included Arkadi Gaidar, a famous writer who had fought at Lake Hassan, and actors from various Moscow theatres.

When she had left the sanatorium her one concern was to catch up with her studies. The doctors advised her against this, but she buckled down to her books, and was promoted to the tenth grade.

In the morning of 22nd June, 1941, I was out shopping and so did not hear Molotov's speech over the radio. When I came home I found Zoya and Shura both highly excited and both trying to tell me at the same time that war had broken out and that the Germans had attacked the Soviet Union.

The menfolk left for the army. Shura was soon enrolled for work in the labour front and was sent somewhere near Smolensk.

Zoya complained loudly that they were not calling up girls. "What wouldn't I give to go with the Red Army, mother," she said, and added: "I'm not a bad shot at all, if I say so myself."

She began to frequent the shooting gallery and regularly attended military classes. It was only then that the idea of my daughter becoming a front-line fighter, with all its serious implications, struck home to me. Until then I had looked on the whole thing as a sort of lark.

Then the air raids on Moscow started. Zoya signed up as a fire-fighter, religiously patrolled her house and stood guard on the roof and in the attic during every alert.

In September it was announced that the school was to close. When her brother Shura returned from the labour front, the two of them went to the Borets plant to learn how to work a turner's lathe. But she did not stay there long. The labour front authorities sent her to a state farm to pick potatoes.

Zoya was radiant with joy. Even if it was not a military, but only a labour front, still it was a front.

In the village she made fast friends among the collective farm men and women. They taught her how to bake, how to put up dough so as to make the bread light and tasty. I myself began to bake bread according to the recipe she brought home.

During those last few weeks of her life that she spent with us Zoya often repeated: "I am so happy. Everything is turning out the way I wanted it to."

"What in particular are you referring to?" I asked.

She smiled, but would not tell.

I realised that she was bent on getting to the front, no matter what the cost. A little while later she told me she was going to take a nursing course. The day before her studies were to commence she unexpectedly said to me in a tone of finality:

"Mother, there's something I want to tell you in strictest confidence. I'm going to work in the rear of the enemy. It's very important and responsible work, and I am proud that I have been entrusted with it. But tell nobody about this, not even Shura. Tell them I went to my grandfather in the village. Mind now, mother, nobody's to know that your daughter has joined the partisans."

Before I had a chance to say a word she continued: "We'll be leaving in two days. Yet get me a service knapsack. The rest I'll get myself. There isn't much I need: a set of underwear, some soap, a towel, a toothbrush and a pencil and paper. That'll be my whole outfit."

There was much suppressed excitement in her voice as she told me all this, but I knew from her face that nothing would induce her to depart from the course she had decided on for herself.

"But Zoya, that's a man's job, not a girl's," I interjected. "It's no easy matter fighting in the enemy's rear, as you undoubtedly will find out."

The next two days she came home very late. She did not say where she had been, and I dared not ask. During these two days, which flew by with lightning speed, she became still more sober-minded, and looked older, far beyond her age. We talked together a good deal. I remember she suggested I should re-read Makarenko's *Pedagogic Poem*. She spoke with affection of her former teacher, Ivan Alexeyevich Yazev. "He's a real Bolshevik," she said, "even though not a Party member."

That was the last evening we spent together at home.

Once more Zoya carefully checked all the things she had to take along and then put them neatly into the knapsack. She wanted to take with her the diary she had kept at the labour front and during the last few days at home. I advised her against it.

"You're right, mother," she suddenly exclaimed. "The stove is the best place for it." And without giving me a chance to stop her she threw the copy-book into the fire.

That night I could not sleep. It occurred to me that perhaps I might never see Zoya again. This might be her last night at home, sleeping in her own bed. I rose quietly and walked on tiptoe to her bedside. She opened her eyes and smiled.

"Why aren't you asleep, mother dear?"

"I got up to see what time it is. You must go to sleep, Zoya darling."

I lay down again, but could not sleep. I wanted to go over to her once more and ask her to think the whole thing over—perhaps she would change her mind. But when in the early morning I glanced over to where she lay, I saw that her face was quite calm, and I knew she was bent on going.

Shura left early for the factory. I had saved some cheese for Zoya. It was her favourite titbit. We had tea and then Zoya began to get dressed. I gave her my woollen jersey.

"But how will you manage without it in the winter, mother?" she asked me with concern. I finally persuaded her to put it on and take some money along. We went out together. It was a dreary day, and I felt full of grief.

"Zoya, let me carry your knapsack for you," I said.

She fixed her eyes on me and replied: "Why be so miserable, mother? Look at me! Why, you even have tears in your eyes. Don't see me off with tears. Cheer up and smile at me again."

I felt ashamed. My daughter was walking along with such a firm and sprightly step. And I smiled at her. A brief pause, then her grim parting words:

"And I—I'll either come back a heroine or die a heroine."

She embraced me, jumped on a tram, and was gone.

Soon I received her first letter—a note of two lines: *Dear Mother! I'm very much alive and feeling fine. How are you over there?—Your Zoya.*

It was only when Shura read this letter that he learned, much to his surprise, that his sister, a mere "petticoat," was now at the front. He knew nothing more than that, as I kept strict faith with Zoya.

Then followed a second letter, and, after a lapse of about two weeks, a third. In it Zoya informed me that at last she had been assigned work, "on the completion of which I shall come home on a visit."

We were overjoyed at the news. We expected her home any day.

But she did not come. I never again saw my daughter alive. When next I saw her she was dead.

I have her note-book, which I cherish dearly. In it she had written: *To be a Communist means to dare, to think, to will, and to have the courage of one's convictions.*

Acc. No.

THE BEECH BOUGH

By A. Kosteyev

I LIVED FOR A WHILE IN THE DUGOUT OF A RED ARMY ENGINEER, TARASSENKOV. The place smelt of damp earth and sealing wax. The day I arrived Tarassenkov, a young man of medium height and unhealthy appearance, with a funny ginger moustache and teeth stained yellow with cigarette smoke, met me politely, but not too amiably.

"Settle yourself here," he said, pointing to a bunk. Then he bent again over his papers. "I hope my office will not be in your way. But I also hope that you will not disturb us too much. Sit down in the meantime."

So I began to live in Tarassenkov's underground office. He was very restless, unusually meticulous and pedantic.

In the evenings he was tormented by attacks of fever, but he categorically refused to go to hospital.

"What are you talking about? How could I go? If I go away for one day it will take a year to straighten things out."

Then a queer thing happened. He refused to have the stove on. I was indignant. Things came to a head one night when I returned to the dugout soaked through and through. I squatted in front of the stove.

Tarassenkov got up from the table and came up to me. "I say, you see, it's like this," he said rather self-consciously. "I have decided not to light the stove for the time being. Let us abstain for some five days or so. Otherwise, you know, the stove gives out fumes and this apparently affects her growing. It has a bad influence on her."

I looked at him blankly.

"Whose growth? The growth of the stove?"

"I made myself quite clear, I think," said Tarassenkov, taking offence. "These fumes obviously affect her badly. She has completely stopped growing."

"But who has stopped growing?"

"Do you mean to say you have not noticed *her* yet?" exclaimed Tarassenkov, staring at me.

With sudden tenderness he looked at the low wooden ceiling of our dugout. I got up, lifted the lamp and saw that the thick branch of a beech tree, forming part of the ceiling, had put forth a green shoot. Pale and delicate, it hung there, supported in two places by bits of white tape.

"Now you understand?" said Tarassenkov. "She was growing very nicely, and grew to be such a lovely little bough, but now we have started heating the place so much, she apparently does not like it. At first I made little notches on this log to mark her growth. You can see how quickly she got on at first. Some days as much as three-quarters of an inch. But now we have started all this heating and fumes I have not noticed any growth for the last three days. If it goes on like this she may begin to ail soon. Let us abstain from lighting the stove, shall we, and smoke less as well?"

So we went to sleep in the unheated, damp dug-out. The following day, in order to win Tarassenkov's sympathy, I myself started talking about his little bough.

"Well, and how is she growing?" I asked, throwing off my wet coat. Tarassenkov leapt up from the table, looked straight into my eyes to make sure I

was not laughing at him. Then, seeing that I really meant it, he lifted the lamp with great excitement, moved it a little to the side so that it should not smoke on his dear little bough, and whispered:

"Just imagine, she has grown nearly a whole inch. I told you we should not light the stove. It is simply a marvel of nature."

At night the Germans attacked our position with massed artillery fire. We woke up to the noise of explosions close by. The earth was falling down on us copiously through the beams of the ceiling. Tarassenkov also woke up and lit the little lamp. Everything was shaking, jerking and flying around us. He set down the lamp on the floor.

"I think there is no great danger. It won't harm her, will it? There is, of course, the shock. But there are three layers above us—unless, of course, we get a direct hit. But you see how I have tied her up carefully, as though I had a premonition."

He was lying back with his arms flung behind his head, gazing with tender solicitude at the weak, green little shoot on the ceiling. He simply forgot that a shell could fall on us as well, burst in the dugout and bury us alive. No, he was only thinking of the pale green bough which was hanging on the ceiling of our dugout. He was only worried about her.

Often now, when at the front or behind the lines I meet men who at first appear to be dry and unamiable, I remember the technician Tarassenkov and his little green bough.

Let explosions burst above our head, let the whole dampness of the earth penetrate into our very marrow, never mind—providing the shy, bashful little green bough is saved, and continues reaching towards its desired goal, the sun.

And it seems to me that each one of us has his own little green bough which he cherishes. For its sake we are prepared to bear all the hardships and sufferings of war time, because we know firmly that outside the dugout the sun shines, and will succour our longing little bough.

THE SMITHY AMONG THE WILLOWS

By Lev Rubinstein

IN THE HEART OF THE TATAR REPUBLIC ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER AKTAI lies the village of Kara Tegermen. Some short distance from the village, between the ancient willows on the clayey banks of the muddy Aktai, a fire gleams red and hammers clatter in Uncle Hisai's collective farm smithy.

Uncle Hisai Yalaldinov is a wonderful old man, with his own theory of the blacksmith's craft. He has a permanent audience to listen when he is pleased to expound—his son Sasha, a well-built lad of 18, and Zakia, who runs the local library, a short stocky, swarthy-complexioned Tatar girl with silver coins braided into her long black plaits. In the mornings she reads Tatar fairy-tales to the school-children. In the evenings she sits in the smithy, thirstily drinking in Uncle Hisai's every word.

"You see, friend," says Uncle Hisai impressively as he blows up his bellows, "in this business we have major repairs and minor repairs. Major repairs are things I understand. Repairing cart springs, for instance, or shoeing horses, that's what I understand. But things like mending bicycle chains, or clocks, aren't in my line. That's the sort of job that Sasha understands. We can't

manage without one another. My hands are rough, and his are slender. So I do the major repairs, and Sasha the minor repairs."

The villagers say that librarian Zakia's decided preference is for "minor repairs," and that she goes to the smithy in search of these.

This spring brought great trials for big clumsy Uncle Hisai. Round about 20th March, a buggy drew up in front of the smithy and Rashide Hareyeva, the chairwoman of the village Soviet, jumped out.

"Greetings, Uncle Hisai," she said. "We've got a big job for you. You've got to re-mark our disc seeders for us. This year we're planting forty acres of kok sagyz, and we need disc seeders adapted to take small seeds."

"Is it a major or a minor repair job?" asked Uncle Hisai.

"I suppose it's a minor repair, but the main thing is that it's an urgent repair!"

"Can't be done, Aunt Rashide," said Uncle Hisai, "I just can't do it."

"Listen, Uncle Hisai," she bullied. "Do you know what kok sagyz is? It's rubber. Rubber for tanks, for aircraft, for artillery. They need it at the front. Surely you've got someone at the front?"

"Yes, my son Sasha goes away to the front to-morrow. That means no more minor repairs. I'm sorry, Rashide, but I don't understand such work."

"We'll give you a lad to help you."

"You astound me, Aunt Rashide," sighed Uncle Hisai. "How long do you think it'll take me to teach a lad?"

"Uncle Hisai," said Rashide Hareyeva, "are you going to make me send ten miles to the next farm for a competent blacksmith?"

The next morning, when Sasha Yalaldinov was harnessing the horse in the buggy to take him to the recruiting centre, he discovered that his father, old Uncle Hisai, wouldn't be coming to see him off.

"I can't go, son," the old man said sternly. "I can't leave the seeders. If there aren't any seeders, there won't be any rubber. Go by yourself. Zakia will see you off. Never turn your back to the enemy, son. Be a good comrade, and do your duty. And we'll wait for you, every day." He embraced his son firmly.

In the evening, when I returned to Kara Tegermen, Uncle Hisai came out of the smithy looking gloomy. The old man had clumsy hands, and mechanic's work of any kind, rough or delicate, came hard to him.

I had come back from the district centre with Zakia, and she gave Sasha's farewell message to his father. Uncle Hisai sighed.

"My son's gone away, and I've done very little to-day," he said. "This job needs strong, slender fingers. I've had to make one seed chute about four times. But I'll do it. We'll have our seeders!"

I glanced at Zakia. Her eyes were slightly swollen with crying, but she raised her long eyelashes and looked thoughtfully into the smithy.

I stayed with Uncle Hisai overnight. He fed me on sweet cottage cheese and millet cakes, and put me to sleep in an ancient wooden bedstead carved with texts from the Koran. At five next morning I was awakened by sounds of hammering. Somebody was working in the smithy.

"The devil!" shouted Uncle Hisai. "What sort of evil spirit's got into my smithy? Where's my whip! I'll warm his back for him!"

We found five schoolchildren in the smithy. Standing near the anvil was librarian Zakia, her sleeves rolled up to her elbows. The silver coins in her black plaits rang in time with her hammer blows.

Uncle Hisai was astounded. He demanded savagely that he be given an immediate explanation. A lanky youth of about fifteen showed him a disc seeder with accurately fixed seed chutes for tiny seeds.

All the technical details had been carefully attended to, so that the seed would be sown at exactly the right depth in the black Tatar soil.

"Sasha asked me to help you with minor repairs," said Zakia shyly. "Don't think I'm too small, Uncle Hisai. I'm strong, and can easily bend big nails in my fingers. My hands are slender but strong!"

The seeders were all ready in time. Planting will begin as soon as it gets a little warmer. This year Tatar collective farms will grow rubber.

Uncle Hisai's smithy undertakes major and minor repairs as formerly. Minor repairs are now the province of the little black-haired girl. Both of them, the old man and the girl, are awaiting letters from the front.

LAMBS, FLUTE AND CLOUDS

By Lev Rubinstein

I HAVE KNOWN KHALILL YAMANKULOV, A LITTLE TWELVE-YEAR-OLD SHEPHERD boy, for a whole year now. In the spring, when flocks of cranes strike over the Bashkir steppes from Iran to the banks of the Kama, music sounds from the fields of the Zenger Sakhra collective farm.

My driver stopped his lorry half-way between Tishimbai and Chkalov and said:

"Do you hear that sound? That's a steppe crane."

But I knew it was no crane's voice. It was the "kurai," a long flute on which the Bashkir shepherds play.

I left my machine on the road and, with the sound of his kurai to guide me, I found Khalill.

He met me smiling and invited me to sit in a little patch of "shade" he had made by stretching an old skirt of his mother's between two branches.

"Is it true what they're saying about you, Khalill," I said, "that you've found treasure in the steppe?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It's the village boys making up a lot of stories," he said. "There isn't any treasure."

"And what is it you've got in that little box?"

Khalill blushed.

"It's what other people lose."

One day great excitement prevailed among my young "pioneer" friends on the Zenger Sakhra collective farm. They had undertaken to collect half a ton of metal scrap by the middle of April. All through March the girls and boys staggered around with bits of old primus stoves, rusty spades, broken horse-shoes, fragments of barbed wire, handles of axes, keys from long-lost padlocks and locks minus their keys.

When they had almost reached their target the difficulties began. My friend Shamseddin Rachmanoff, a freckled lad of about fourteen years old, who was in charge of the collection, had searched every stable and repair shop. He had combed the barn, the dairy, the fire brigade depot. All he found was a disc out of an old separator and three worn spoons.

"I wonder if Khalill could help," worried Shamseddin. "They say he has found all sorts of things on the steppe. A few horseshoes, now——"

Khalill shook his head.

Then Shamseddin pointed with his finger to the clouds, which were slowly floating along the sky, and gave a masterly description of how a German Messerschmitt could drop its bombs and kill the sheep.

"Impossible!" Khalill said angrily. "The sheep are all numbered."

"He doesn't care if they're numbered or not," Shamseddin told him. "He's a bad man. He's 'doshman' (enemy). But the muzzles of the anti-aircraft guns turn upwards, and bang! Doshman catches fire and falls. When I'm grown up I'm going to be an anti-aircraft gunner, sure as sure. That's what the scrap is wanted for. Anti-aircraft artillery. Understand?"

In the evening, when Shamseddin and I were at Auntie Ksenia's arguing what we should do to find some more scrap metal, the door opened and Khalill came in. He put down a heavy case on the floor and looked sheepishly at the picture of Marshal of Artillery Voronov, cut out from *Pravda*, which hung on the wall.

"Here is the treasure," he said, "I've been collecting it for a whole year. They can make A.A. shells out of that."

It was Khalill's treasure; the product of two years' wandering through the steppe. He'd picked up every fragment he saw lying about on the roads and in the fields. There were bicycle gadgets, horseshoes, handfuls of ball-bearings, casings from cartridges, rusty locks from rifles thrown away as long ago as the Civil War.

The Pioneers of Zenger Sakhra overfulfilled their plan for scrap metal delivery, thanks to Khalill.

THE LITTLE GREEN LIGHTS

By Lev Rubinstein

DECEMBER IN THE SOUTHERN URALS MEANS 42 DEGREES BELOW ZERO CENTIGRADE, plus a terrific wind.

In such weather, when the Ufa steppe becomes a raging sea of snow, postman Temir Yusupov gave me a lift from the village of Lipovka to Chekmagush, the district centre. We made the journey overnight. In the darkness I could hardly see his snow-covered sheepskin coat. I could only hear him urging his horses forward, and shouting exultantly over and over again, "Hey, there! The mail is coming."

To tell the truth, I had no great confidence in my driver, even though the postmaster at Lipovka had assured me that he was the best one on the line. For Temir was only fourteen. When I expressed my doubts outright, the young Bashkir became offended.

"So what?" he snorted. "Our Salavat was a big *batyr* (champion) at 13." Salavat, the eighteenth century warrior and poet, is the national hero of the Soviet Republic of Bashkiria.

"But will you get me to Chekmagush?"

"If you don't trust me you had better walk. I'm carrying more valuable goods than your carcass, brother—gifts for the front, tobacco, warm socks,

sweets and good news. What do you mean, will I get you to Chekmagush? We'll be there at 6 a.m. sharp."

"Have you been on this job long?"

"Ever since my brother Galim went to the war. He used to be the postman before me. He's chasing Germans now."

About eight miles out of Lipovka I noticed a crowd of little green lights flickering behind us.

"Look, Temir," I said, "what are those lights?"

"What lights? Those aren't lights," Temir replied with perfect calmness. "Those are wolves."

As if to confirm his words the horses made a rush forward. The sleigh slid up a high snowdrift, moved some ten yards on one runner, then streaked over the steppe at a speed any Packard would have envied.

"Are the parcels all right?" I heard Temir ask. "This is a front line job of first importance, do you understand?"

"The parcels are all right. You had better get a hold on the horses."

"Don't worry. We'll be at Chekmagush at six o'clock sharp."

The green lights followed us. Temir hauled furiously on the reins, his body flung back. Clods of snow hit him in the face, drops of perspiration froze on his forehead. The horses seemed to have gone mad.

Seventeen miles out of Lipovka the sleigh swung sharply round. I lost my balance and landed in a snowdrift.

"Temir!" I shouted desperately.

Through the roar of the gale I heard his voice. "I'm coming."

I drew a pistol and fired three times. Again I heard Temir's calm voice.

"You're wasting cartridges. Jump in quickly. Don't be afraid. I'm holding on to the reins." A few seconds later we were again rushing along the steppe.

"How did you manage to calm the horses?"

"I sang."

I looked at him in astonishment. He smiled and started to sing. It was a long, plaintive Bashkir song composed by himself. It told of night on the steppe, of wolves, of Brother Galim who was fighting the Germans on the Don, of gifts for the front and of the good news. The green dots fell further and further behind and finally disappeared from view altogether. To the strains of the song we entered Chekmagush and drove up to the post office.

"You mustn't be afraid of wolves," said Temir mischievously. "Only sing to them, and they depart."

And he roared with laughter.

It was warm and stuffy in the post office.

"Register these parcels for the front, Temir," said the girl on duty. "They'll be off in an hour."

Then: "What is the news?" she asked in a strained voice.

"Fine news. The Germans are getting a beating at Stalingrad. And what a beating." Temir slapped his felt boot gaily with his whip and went out.

An hour later bells were heard in the yard. The 14-year-old postman was starting on his way back across the blind steppe, through the terrific storm. I heard his voice in the distance, carolling to the furies of the night: "Hey, there! The mail is coming."

A few days later I learned that Temir Yusupov had been decorated for excellent work.

THE BUNDLE

By Lev Rubinstein

IT WAS RAINING. THE URALS FOOTHILLS WERE OBSCURED IN MIST. THE FIELDS were flooded after a heavy downpour. An aged woman stood bareheaded near a signpost, rain streaming down her face, and hand raised to stop our car. The driver pulled up sharply.

"What's the matter, Granny?"

"Give me a lift to the Kalinin collective farm. I've walked all the way from Yanuala."

Yakup, our driver, helped her in beside him. She held in her arms something that looked rather like a newly-born babe wrapped up in a woollen kerchief.

"What's that in your arms, Granny, an infant?" inquired Yakup.

The old lady shook her head.

Yakup looked suspiciously at the bundle pressed to her breast.

"Why don't you cover your head with your kerchief?"

"If the sun shone, my son, I'd have put it over my head," she replied calmly. "But in the rain I can't."

Yakup shrugged. "Other people act differently, Granny. Look at your wet head!"

"My head won't melt in the rain, my son. Besides, the rain is warm and can do no harm."

But the inquisitive Yakup was not to be put off. "What is it you have that might melt in the rain?"

The old woman made no reply.

Yakup half-turned his head and hissed: "Looks like explosive to me."

Yakup is a romantic lad who often allows his imagination to run away with him. The other day he tried to tell me that in his car he had beaten the mail plane flying from Ufa to Beloretzk. When he arrived at Beloretzk, he said, he received a letter he himself had sent by mail plane.

So I was a little impatient with his nagging. "You keep quiet, my lad, and leave the poor old thing alone."

But soon he was at it again. "If I were you, Granny, I shouldn't undertake such long trips on foot, particularly with a load like you've got there."

"You are mistaken, my son. I was sent by the collective farm."

"But why should the farm send such an old woman?"

"I'm a member of the administration of the farm, and am responsible for certain special cultivation," she replied with dignity.

Yakup gaped in amazement. The old woman smiled graciously.

"Granny, tell me frankly, have you got explosives there?"

Evidently she did not understand the meaning of the word "explosives," for she nodded.

"Yes, I have, my son. There's sugar in that kerchief of mine."

"Oh, damn!" exclaimed the disappointed Yakup angrily. "Why carry sugar in a woollen kerchief? Did you get it at the market?"

"No, I got it at the laboratory!"

"Sugar at the laboratory?"

"Yes, my son, this sugar is for the troops."

"Since when has sugar for the troops been produced at laboratories?" cried Yakup, his curiosity defeated at last.

Finally we arrived at the Kalinin Collective Farm. In the office the old woman unwrapped her woollen kerchief. It contained three kilograms of sugar beet seeds.

Yakup goggled at them.

"I told you, my boy," said she, "that I was responsible for certain cultivation. Last year I took a special course in sugar beet planting. We shall be gathering the first crop this autumn, and the mills will make sugar for the troops."

"How old are you, Granny?"

"How inquisitive you are, my boy!" she reproved him. "I'm seventy-one."

THE MAN FROM BAKU

By Lev Rubinstein

THE AREA WE CALL "NEWFIELDS," NEAR THE BASHKIRIAN VILLAGE OF ISHIMBAI, begins three miles from the river Belaya, which is narrow here and covered with iridescent petroleum spots.

Ishimbai was an ordinary village ten years ago, when the geologists first began to explore the district. To-day the surrounding hills are covered with a forest of derricks. The wind carries the pungent petroleum odour for 20 miles to the foothills of the Urals.

At "Newfields" petroleum has not yet been extracted. The wells are only now being drilled. Mountains, wet sand, clay, mud, ditches, pumps, clouds of steam and wet mist—that is the landscape at "Newfields."

Three drillers were working at well NR412. The drilling machine purred as it drove into yard after yard of clay and limestone. Salamov, the foreman, hardly turned his head to answer my greetings. He was busy.

This broad-shouldered, swarthy man is a native of Azefbaidjan. From childhood he has been accustomed to inhaling petroleum gas. He has worked at Baku and Grozny. He helped to get Maglobek and Maikop restarted after the Germans. Now he is at Ishimbai.

At last he turned his face towards me. Beneath his thin moustache flashed dazzlingly white teeth.

"The Red Army is driving westward, comrade," he said. "We are driving northward. Note that well NR412 is the northernmost at Ishimbai, and geological surveyors are already getting close to the upper reaches of the Ufa river. Where else in the world, except at Sakhalin, is petroleum obtained at this latitude?"

"And where do you expect to stop?"

"Well, I started south of Baku and expect to finish on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. Bashkiria is a good school. We drilled here at 54 below zero, and the black petroleum flowed along a groove in the snow. That was in March, when in Transcaucasia the nightingales were singing and the trees were budding."

"Isn't it hard work in winter?"

"Until recently, no drilling was done in winter. It involved too great an expenditure of material, because of the frozen soil. We made a start, however. We have elaborated a special technique for winter drilling. When we get to Kama, the professors will have to open a new course—'drilling eternally frozen soil'."

"Why do you think there is petroleum there?"

"I feel it. Sometimes I think I can see it lying underground. I ought to know. I am all saturated with oil. Anyway, the geologists say the stuff's there."

The reddish clay came up with a hissing sound. Russet water flowed along the ditches. Soon the first oily streaks would appear in the clay solution. That would mean a holiday for Salamov. His vigil lasts for two or three days. When a well is drilled to the end, he takes a rest.

I waited for more than three hours. But the well was obstinate. I went back to the office, where the man on duty put me up for the night.

"Salamov's a wonder!" said he, lighting a gas stove. "He eats into the soil with his teeth. It's quite true he's saturated with petroleum. If you put a match to him, he'd catch alight. Do you know what present they gave him a little while ago? A drum of German synthetic petrol, all the way from the front. He laughed himself sick. He said it was utter rubbish! No good at all in cold weather!"

At 5.30 a.m. there was a soft knock at the door. Salamov entered with a mysterious smile on his thin lips. "I've brought you some milk for breakfast," he said solemnly, and placed a jar on the table. Iridescent spots floated in the jar. Well NR412 was already clear of water and gas.

"A rich, gifted well," said Salamov with satisfaction. "And it's exactly my hundredth. I am accepting congratulations on the birth of a new child. Just feel it! What a fine, oily bit of merchandise! To-morrow we'll begin on NR418, farther north."

I pretended to be puzzled. "Do you mean to say this petroleum is better than the German synthetic?"

Salamov beamed: "Their chemical petrol? Why, it's exactly like Hitler! Makes a lot of noise, stinks and leaves a pile of dirt. What rubbish, what utter rubbish! Of course it's no good!"

THE BLUE BUS

By Lev Rubinstein

THE BLUE BUS WITH A COMPANY OF ACTORS FROM THE BASHKIRIAN PHILHARMONIC was held up on the banks of the River Belaya at Ufa. We had to wait for the ferry-boat to take us to the other side. Behind us was a long string of motor trucks, trailers and farm carts.

The ice had just begun to break up and the river was in flood. The ferry-boat was slow. Galiaskarov, our producer and manager, sat idly picking the strings of his guitar and gazing at the pale April sky. Suddenly he jumped up and pulled a packet of music manuscript paper from under his seat.

"What's happened?" I asked him.

"Listen!" muttered Galiaskarov, pulling out a fountain pen.

I listened. Some soldier from the front, his arm in a bandage, was sitting on a bench singing an improvised Bashkirian love song. He swayed his whole body in rhythm.

"By night Farrakh Islamov stands on guard and sees you, my darling. By day Farrakh Islamov fires his mortar and sees you, my dear. He drove the enemy from Stalingrad and from Voronezh, and still saw you before him, beloved. . . ."

Bashkirian singers compose their own songs. No self-respecting singer will repeat standard texts. To them, singing is thinking aloud. They sing in the field as they follow the plough, at the front as they serve the guns, as they drive through the snowy gloom of a fierce February blizzard. Songs serve them as a diary, sometimes even as a newspaper.

Galiaskarov succeeded in jotting down the song.

The ferry-boat came and the singer disappeared. That evening we arrived at the "Harvest" Collective Farm in Korash Yarbin and gave our first concert in the toolshed by the light of two oil lamps. The circle of yellow light fell on the faces of a row of Bashkirian girls seated on sheepskin rugs in front of the audience. Our "prima donna," Salikha Urmakova, took her guitar and sang the song we'd heard that morning at the riverside. Galiaskarov announced it as a "Soldier's Song of the Bashkirian Division."

When the singer came to the name of Farrakh Islamov there was a noticeable sensation among the audience. At "my darling" and "my dear" the beautiful girls in the front row flashed their brilliant white teeth. One of them, a little thing with long chestnut hair braided with coloured ribbons, marched boldly on to the stage after the song and said to Salikha: "Have you got an accordion? Give it to me and I'll sing."

The accordion was in the care of the manager, who is also a musician. He looked rather doubtfully at the swarthy girl and asked, "Who are you?"

"Agafey Shakhmanova, group leader in the vegetable garden brigade."

The other girls began to shout, "Go on! You give our Agafey the accordion. You can trust her. She's the best worker in the potato field and she sings like a bird of the steppes."

Agafey took the accordion, and sang: "Wherever I go you're always before me, Farrakh, my darling. When I follow the harrow, you walk before me, my dear. When I'm planting potatoes I see you before me, beloved. When I go to a concert I get greetings from you. . . ."

"Hey, what's this?" interrupted the manager, excitedly grabbing pen and paper. "Do you really know this Farrakh?"

The girls in the front row roared with laughter.

"That Islamov was our brigadier," they chattered. "He went to the front last year. So handsome! Agafey Shakhmanova is engaged to him."

"She'd have been married if it hadn't been for the war," added someone's deep bass from the semi-darkness of the back row, "but now there's nothing to be done about it. Kismet. She'll have to wait a bit."

A fresh burst of laughter. Agafey returned the accordion to its owner, bowed ceremoniously from the waist and asked, "Are you going to the front?"

"We're going in the summer," answered the manager.

"Then sing my song there. And add that he should write more often. It's a long time since we had a letter from him. And add that his mother Marzia sends him greetings."

"How can I add anything? I don't know the text or the music."

"Are you crazy?" exclaimed Agafey. "What is there in composing a song? You've got an accordion and you've got a throat! Are you dumb?"

The next morning we moved on. I asked Galiaskarov, "Who was that soldier at the ferry?"

The manager shrugged.

"Perhaps one of Farrakh's comrades. These songs make the rounds of the regiment. The Bashkirs are a musical people. They can't live without songs any more than you and I can live without cigarettes."

After saying good-bye to Farrakh's sweetheart and her friends, we all piled into the blue bus and set out for the "New Village" collective farm in the Baimaksk district of Bashkiria, where my friends from the Philharmonic were to give a concert in a field camp.

When the show was over, a venerable old man appeared behind the white sheet which served to screen us from the audience, and with a polite bow announced that he was the chairman of the collective farm and had come for what he called "a word on a personal matter."

Puzzled, our producer Galiaskarov followed him outside. A few minutes later we learned that we were requested to give another concert, this time in a kindergarten.

So off we went. The kindergarten was housed in an ordinary cottage with a red iron roof and a broad flight of steps half-hidden in a luxuriant growth of wormwood, the height of a man. Children of three, four and five years old were playing in front, and on the steps sat a girl of about 16 grinding millet in a mortar.

"Listen, little girl, where's the director of this kindergarten?" Galiaskarov asked.

"I'm the director," she replied, without interrupting her work.

Galiaskarov looked abashed for a second. Then he held out his hand and said in a businesslike tone, "I'm Galiaskarov, a producer from the theatre. We've come to give a concert at your kindergarten. May we start getting ready?"

The girl set down the mortar, wiped her fingers on her apron, and shook hands.

"I'm Sultanova Bibikamal. Yes, you can start. I'll just get the children together. Here, Nureddin, Zakar, Rashide, call everyone!"

A few minutes later, our prima donna Urmakova was singing for an assembly of laughing, bronze-faced children with lively narrow eyes. To their credit be it said they behaved exactly like a genuine grown-up audience, clapped their hands vigorously, and shouted "Bravo" and "Encore."

Urmakova sang a folk song about "The Good and Bad Man." Then our producer turned actor and read a story about a boy partisan. Towards the end, Nazira Sakhabutdinova performed a camel dance. We were about to declare the concert over when young Sultanova Bibikamal suggested that we should take the audience's place, and judge the local talent.

First, eight-year-old Maida Safina read a Bashkir fable about two frogs. One of them started out from Ufa with the intention of seeing Belebei, and the other left Belebei with the intention of seeing Ufa. They met on Tokman mountain, from which both Belebei and Ufa could be seen.

There they rose upon their hind legs, and each was very disappointed to find that Belebei looked exactly like Ufa, and Ufa like Belebei. So they each decided to return home.

Poor creatures, they had not understood that when frogs get up on their hind legs their eyes look backward, not forward, and so all that each frog saw was his own country.

This turn was succeeded by a "trick rider's dance," performed by seven-year-old Galyam Yamalov, who invented it. So complex and tempestuous was it that my pen fails me when I attempt to describe it.

It was our turn now to clap and call out "Bravo! Encore!" Then Sultanova herself sang us some village songs, with refrains characteristic of the steppes of

Bashkiria. Galiaskarov was lost in admiration for her fresh, ringing voice and excellent ear.

"I was to have gone to town for singing lessons," she said smiling, "but nothing came of it this year. My father went into the Army, and my mother went on the farm. Now she heads a brigade of tractor drivers."

"How old is she?" asked our prima donna.

"She's forty-nine. She learnt how to drive in 1931. Now they're short-handed at the tractor station, and the sugar beet sowing must be done. Our district is famous for beets. Did you see the sugar refinery at Baimak?"

We replied that we had. "Well, the army needs sugar. We shan't get any from the Ukraine this year. My mother went into the field with a tractor. But where were all the children to go? All the women are out in the fields and gardens. So I was made director of the kindergarten. I've got thirty children here."

"How do you manage alone with thirty children?"

"I've an assistant, Sharide Yamalova—she's thirteen. She works as a postman as well. Then there's old Granny Murzian, who cooks the dinners and washes the children's clothes. That's all. Would you like me to dance the polka for you?"

The Bashkir polka differs from other polkas in that the movements are mostly of the arms. As the young directress danced she shouted to her charges, in rhythm with her gestures: "Zakir, don't put your finger in your mouth! Nuri, leave the cat in peace!"

For a long time the sixteen year-old directress stood on the steps waving her hand after our blue bus. Then we lost sight of her; she must have gone indoors to put her thirty charges to bed. It was time for their afternoon rest.

THE FORTUNATE VILLAGE

By Boris Leonidov

MITROSHKINO IS FREE AGAIN. IT IS A SOVIET VILLAGE TOO SMALL TO BE MARKED on any map. Yet Mitroshkino is one of the most fortunate villages ever liberated from the Germans.

The fortunate thing is that practically all its cottages, sheds, and even the village reading-room—the sort of building the Germans usually take particular delight in destroying—have been left intact. This does not mean that some humane, decent unit was found to exist in the German army.

Mitroshkino lay some distance from the railway and highway, so that the Germans only passed through it on their way somewhere else. On their retreat before the Red Army's thrusts, they hoped to stop for a breather in the village, but the Soviet thrust was too powerful: they only had time to drive away the cows and fall like wolves upon the sheep, pigs and other livestock. Then they had to go.

When the Red Army arrived they were warmly welcomed by the village women and children. According to ancient custom, bread and salt were offered—symbols of hospitality. These symbols were contained in a wooden bowl decorated with quaint traditional designs and covered with an embroidered towel.

Katerina Shkurenkova, a peasant woman of 55, who carried the bowl, stepped out into the roadway, made the passing Red Army men a very low bow,

and called hospitably: "You're welcome to our bread and salt. Come and rest yourselves." Then she added in a less official tone: "And have a bit of roast chicken—do!"

Captain Gorbunov, commander of the unit, accepted the bread and salt from Katerina's hands, kissed her three times as custom required, thanked her, but declined the roast chicken.

"Thanks, granny, but we've no time just now. We must catch the Germans, or else they'll slip through our fingers."

"But have some roast chicken first! Aren't you going to try our roast chickens?" A disappointed chorus rose from the crowd of women and children.

The Red Army men's mouths watered. They sighed. They licked their lips. But no. The chickens would wait. The Germans wouldn't.

The villagers watched the soldiers disappearing down the road. Their spirits were somewhat dashed. It hadn't been easy to rescue those fowls alive from the Germans.

Katerina Shkurenkova was the heroine of that day. She had set her own cunning, half a century of shrewdness, against the insatiable greed of the all-devouring German wolves.

It was too late to drive away the cows, sheep and pigs, and impossible to hide them.

"At any rate, we can save the hens," said Granny Katerina.

"Hopeless! The Germans will easily find them," someone objected.

"They won't find them if you do as I say," replied Katerina. "Kill the cocks. Hens don't crow, and so they won't give themselves away."

So all the cocks were killed and the hens hidden.

Seated now in her roomy cottage among her admiring neighbours, with the Germans scuttling west, Katerina felt like a heroine. But when they began to talk of the future their faces saddened.

"How shall we manage to keep poultry now we have killed all the cocks?" asked one collective farm woman.

Katerina smiled complacently. "We have a cock—a pedigree bird, too. I saved it. Trust Granny Katerina. The Germans have been chased a long way off now. We can begin to restore the farm."

SMALL BOY

By M. Yakhontova

AT THE HEIGHT OF THE STALINGRAD BATTLE YAKOVLEV, A RED ARMY SPOTTER, was clambering back to his battery over the debris of what had once been a street when he stumbled over a grey bundle hidden under a heap of bricks in a corner of a half-ruined house.

The bundle stirred, unfolded, and resolved itself before Yakovlev's astonished eyes into a small boy of nine. The child was enveloped in a man's padded jacket reaching to his feet.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Yakovlev. "You'll be killed."

"Oh, not everybody gets killed—there are always a few left alive," the small boy retorted in a dignified croak, squatting down on his bare heels.

"Well, that's good sense, but anyway let's get out of here."

As they went along Yakovlev treated his new acquaintance to a handful

of rusks and sugar. The boy crunched away with great appetite at the rusks, but the sugar he put away carefully in his pocket.

He chattered readily in reply to Yakovlev's questions. His name was Volodya. His parents had been killed by the Hitlerites. Now he was living with his old granny. She had lived in Stalingrad all her life, and she was determined that she would if necessary die there, but she would not leave.

That was the beginning of a firm friendship between Yakovlev and Volodya. The next day, as Yakovlev was returning from the observation point, Volodya glided like a little wraith from the ruins and accompanied his friend to the battery. This happened every day.

Soon they knew everything there was to know about each other. Volodya knew how many teeth Yakovlev's small daughter had cut. Yakovlev's learned what a dreadful old cross-patch Volodya's grandmother was.

Then one day Yakovlev did not turn up at his usual place. The area he was observing was surrounded by Germans, so Volodya waited in vain.

That evening he set out to do a bit of reconnoitring on his own account. Like a grey mouse he slipped in and out between piles of stone and brick, until at last he reached the ruin that served as an observation post.

There he found Yakovlev lying wounded on the floor in a room without a roof. Blood was streaming from his head, which he clutched between his hands.

"Hey there, get up!" whispered Volodya urgently. "Don't you know there are Germans all around?"

Yakovlev did not move, or even look up. "Yes, I know they are all around me. I've done them some bad turns, and now they won't let me go."

"Never mind, Uncle! We'll get out of this all right," Volodya assured him. "There's not a corner I don't know in the whole block."

Yakovlev got heavily to his feet and obeyed the childish, compelling hand. They crept through back yards, scrambled along drain pipes, crawled into cellars. More than once they heard German voices. Once they glimpsed a German helmet silhouetted against the red sky.

They got back safely to the battery. Yakovlev, his wounds bandaged, lay relaxed in his bunk. As he looked at the child squatting on the floor his eyes filled with tears and he could barely trust himself to speak.

A Red Army man came in with a couple of mugs of soup. "Thanks, pal," said Volodya.

He drank it noisily, then drew his padded coat around him and turned to go back to his grandmother's ruined cellar. "I'll be back to-morrow, if I can give the old lady the slip."

Then, poking his head around the door, he scolded Yakovlev. "You're not to go out without me in future. I wonder they trust you as far as the end of the street."

PATIMAT

By M. Yakhontova

PATIMAT WAS THE DAUGHTER OF ZAKARI, THE GARDENER AT THE FRUNZE Sanatorium in the Kabardinian mountains, in the North Caucasus. Until last year she knew war only from what she had seen in pictures hanging on the sanatorium walls. The war that came scorching the threshold of her home was

not like that. There were no splendid cavalry charges by black-eyed heroes waving sabres. There was only a droning in the air, a thunder over the land, and smoke blackening the pure mountains.

Patimat went on working just as she had done before the war. There was nobody resting in the sanatorium, of course. Red Army artillerymen were billeted there. But, like the patients, they had to be fed. Their clothes had to be laundered. And so Patimat cooked the dinners and washed Red Army men's shirts.

The water pipes were broken and the brook nearby had become dirty and foul, so Patimat heard the doctors say. So every night she used to go high up to the mountain brooks to fetch water.

"What will you do if you meet a German in the mountains?" old Zakari asked his daughter. "Drown him in your pitcher?"

"I take your dagger with me, father," Patimat answered.

Old Zakari laughed at her.

"My old dagger! Why, it's only good for making stakes to prop up roses."

Just before sunrise one morning Patimat set out as usual on her journey up the steep mountainside. The moon was slowly disappearing behind the hills. The thunder of the guns seemed to be getting louder. She stopped, alarmed. Dawn seemed to have brought the war nearer the sanatorium.

Patimat, her face pitted with pock marks, was far from being beautiful. She had no one in the world who loved her except her father. Yet Patimat, convinced that she would never have a family of her own, was ready to befriend the whole world. She had no brothers, so to Patimat the Red Army men whose shirts she washed every day were her brothers. The sanatorium was her home, and every object in it was dear to her, every man's life infinitely precious.

To get more quickly to the brook she turned from the path. She had hardly gone a few steps when she saw the muzzle of a gun sticking out from behind big stones.

Patimat stood breathlessly. A man in a strange uniform was stretched out on the edge of a cliff overlooking a precipice. Through a pair of binoculars he was surveying the sanatorium grounds. In his hand he held something with a cable attached to it. The cable trailed into the bushes. She heard the man say something in a half whisper. In a few moments she heard the whizzing of shells. The earth near the sanatorium was battered into the air.

Patimat remembered how the Red Army men had said that in order to shoot accurately you must have a pair of keen eyes directing you. She realised that the stranger was the eyes of the guns shooting at the sanatorium.

She acted. The German heard a pitcher crashing downhill. Hands clutched him by the throat from behind. At first he thought a Caucasian vulture had attacked him. The dull blade of the dagger slid towards his throat. He struck at the hand which held it. Zakari's dagger flew out of his daughter's hand.

The soldier twisted and turned, but the girl would not let go. She hung on like steel, hauling him to the edge of the precipice.

Finally he slipped, losing his balance. His automatic lay far out of reach. He made no more attempt to extricate himself from her grip, but clung despairingly to every blade of grass. Nearer and nearer the two bodies rolled to the ravine.

Patimat felt with her foot for strong support. The mountain tops stopped dancing before her eyes. Gripping the German firmly, she thrust forward.

The Red Army men found the bodies when they went to get water at noon.

CABBAGE SOUP

By the Brothers Tur

THE GERMANS USED AT FIRST TO CALL STALINGRAD A POCKET EDITION OF HELL. Later on they amended this description and began calling hell a pocket edition of Stalingrad.

The Soviet trench mortar positions ran through the upper floor of No. 36, Lenin Street. The Germans held a basement on the opposite side of the road. Every foot of space between these two buildings was under fire. Even the bats had deserted this block.

And yet one living soul remained there. At dusk the lid of a manhole right in the middle of the street, just between the two firing lines, would lift, and a housewifely hand would toss out the garbage.

Here, in a cast-iron drainpipe in the city's underground belly, lived a single old woman. She wore an old-fashioned winter coat with a fox fur collar. The Red Army men became very fond of her. She would creep across the street and climb the half-ruined charred staircase, bringing the smoke-stained trench-mortar gunners freshly washed foot wrappings, darned socks and warm porridge.

She had a little kerosene stove which hummed away quietly in the manhole, amid the thunder of the greatest battle in the history of wars.

When the men ran out of soap, Maria Gavrilovna would invariably find a little bit somewhere. And once when the battery commander had a bad toothache, she brought him a hot, soothing decoction.

The Red Army men began to call her "Mother."

One morning Maria Gavrilovna told her sons that to-day she would give them a feast—hot cabbage soup. She found the head of a cabbage somewhere, and in combination with tinned bully beef this promised to be an outstanding treat. At dusk, when the fire had somewhat abated, the familiar figure appeared out of the manhole and plodded across the street, a steaming bowl of cabbage soup in her hand. Suddenly the Germans opened fire at her with machine-guns. She walked calmly, without haste, so as not to spill the precious food. The trench-mortar gunners returned the Germans' fire to defend their mother. When she climbed the stairs, not having spilt a single drop of soup, the men noticed blood coming from under her kerchief. Quietly she sank to the floor and never regained consciousness. She was buried at night in the courtyard of House No. 36.

The men wrote on her grave: "Here lies Maria Gavrilovna Timofeyeva, mother of X trench-mortar battalion."

AN OLD MAN IS DYING

By Ilya Ehrenburg

The story I am going to tell is not the fruit of a writer's imagination: it is a factual report about the fate of the Pavlov family, who lived in Gzhatsk. I have added nothing: in the face of this human tragedy, the imagination is silent. This is no story, but a protocol. It is an indictment of Germany.

PAVEL IVANOVICH PAVLOV, CENTENARIAN OF THE VILLAGE OF BORODULINO, IS waiting for death.

The Germans took away everything he possessed: they did not leave him so much as a clean shirt to put on before his death.

He lived to see the Russians come back to Borodulino. He pulled through to this hour. Now he will die. He looks around him: like an uprooted forest is his family.

The old man is still afraid. In winter the merciful snow spread its shroud over the wounded earth. Now the snow is gone. The streets of Gzhatsk are a waste of sooty bricks, iron bars and rubble. In the German cemeteries the crosses are lined up in straight rows.

But there are no crosses to mark the graves of women tortured to death by the Germans; there is no counting of the people killed or driven away to slavery.

Pavlov has lived a long life. He was a child when the guns of Sevastopol thundered. He remembers the liberation of the serfs. He never dreamed, then, that seventy years later he would see new slave-owners.

Pavlov used to go to the fair in Gzhatsk. He bought presents for the children and prayed at the Kazan Cathedral. He does not know that not a single house is standing in the market-place.

But the old man is afraid: disaster has come.

In the old days he used to say to his daughters: "When the family is together, the soul is at rest." Now the Germans have scattered his family far and wide, and the old man's soul strives to leave its mortal frame.

Pavlov married late. He was fifty-seven when his younger daughter, Lena, was born. His wife died many years ago. But his daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren used all to come to see him at Borodulino. The old man would look at the children and recall olden years, the merry-making at the river, the village parties, the green Smolensk spring.

Now, dying, he keeps wondering distressfully: what has happened to them all?

His elder daughter, Feodosia Pavlovna, must be fifty-three now. Is she alive?

Long before the revolution she met Kuzma Ivanovich Olenov. They married. After the war Olenov came back to Gzhatsk. He was a man of modest station—he tended the town herd. In 1918 he was given a little cottage on the outskirts of the town. The place was called Leningradskaya Mezha. The house was small but clean. The samovar always shone brightly, the clock ticked away, the children's school certificates and framed photographs hung on the walls.

Olenov had four children. The semi-literate herdsman used to say: "Let them study, the scamps!"

Then Vanya, the oldest, graduated from secondary school and Olenov told his friends solemnly: "He is a cine-mechanic, my Vanya is." And Feodosia Pavlovna wrote her father in Borodulino: "Vanya is now in the films."

The old man had never been to the movies, but he approved of his grandson: "So his studies did him good."

Then Vanya married. He found his bride in the village of Mishino and brought her to Gzhatsk. They lived fine. Then the children started coming. Here already was the fifth in a crib.

Ivan Kuzmich was in the army and the war caught him far away from Gzhatsk. His wife, with five children, went to stay with her mother in Mishino.

Olenev's second son, Misha, was a chauffeur. He liked to take his father for joy rides, and watch the old boy's expression as he stepped on the gas. In Karmanovo, Misha met his bride. Soon there was a wedding. When the Germans attacked, Misha's son was two years old.

Misha went to war. The Germans were approaching Gzhatsk. Misha's wife took the child in her arms and set out on foot to the east. Thousands of people trudged along the road. They marched in silence: what was there to say? And the baby cried . . . what happened to the young wife? Did she reach safety or was she killed by the Germans? Nobody knows.

The third son, Shura, was the favourite. He was fifteen when the war broke out. He did well at school—was considered the cleverest pupil. Maria Ivanovna, the teacher, used to say to his mother: "Your Shura will be an inventor."

Shura was small, freckled, with an unruly lock of hair on his forehead. He looked intent and eager. Always he would be tinkering with something.

His sister Lida was one year younger, a tall, strong, pretty girl.

Thus the Olenevs lived, and the grandfather in Borodulino was happy just to look at them. How fine his children were—the grandchildren and great-grandchildren would be better still.

On a windy autumn day, soldiers in greyish-green greatcoats appeared in the Gzhatsk streets. Two Germans came into Olenev's room, threw themselves on the bed and shouted in bad Russian: "Hey you, give us eggs."

Even before that day the Olenevs had had worry enough. Letters came from Vanya, but Misha never wrote. Then some Red Army men passing through Gzhatsk said Misha had been cut off—perhaps he had got through to the guerillas.

Feodosia Pavlovna tried to silence her fears. And Kuzma Ivanovich was silent.

Misha was missing, and no one knew the fate of his wife and child.

And now the Germans were in Gzhatsk. Vanya's wife and children were in Mishino, but there was no getting there—the Germans would not let anyone leave the town.

And what had happened to the old man in Borodulino? Feodosia Pavlovna worried about her father.

And on top of that, the Germans make hell in the house: now you must get them milk, now wash their laundry, now start the samovar. And she was down with acute rheumatism and could not walk.

But the Germans shouted "*Schnell*," and Feodosia Pavlovna made haste—she was afraid for her children. She had a presentiment.

On Saturday they came and took Shura away. She cried, and Shura told her: "Don't you worry yourself, mother."

Old Olenev went to the police and begged: "Let the boy go." An officer came out and said through an interpreter: "You go home, old man. We have to find out whether your son has anything to do with the guerillas or not."

On Sunday morning a neighbour came running to them and said: "Shura is screaming. You can hear him even in the street."

Feodosia Pavlovna's rheumatism was terribly bad, but even so, she ran to the police and begged: "Please let him go, he is just a little boy."

The Germans laughed. They had found "evidence" on Shura, they said—a flashlight with a spare battery, a map of Germany torn out of a school atlas, and a photograph of his brothers in military uniform.

As well as Shura, they took his friend Dyoshin, a young teacher. The

Germans flogged Dyoshin and Shura. Even in the street Shura could be heard screaming: "Beasts!"

On Monday, at daybreak, old Olenev stood at the door of the police station. He waited for a long time. Finally an officer came out on the porch. The interpreter read from a scrap of paper: "Peter Dyoshin and Alexander Olenev, shot for connections with the guerillas." The officer nodded and smiled.

Olenev wanted to say something, but could not. He stood silent. The Germans threw him out into the street.

So the Olenevs have none left but their daughter Lida. They lived through the severe winter. The spring came. The Germans rejoiced, drank Schnaps and shouted to old Feodosia Pavlovna: "Dance, woman!"

On 25th May, the police came and took the Olenevs to the railway station. "Where are you taking us?" asked Kuzma Ivanovich. He was sixty.

"First to Baranovichi, and after that we shall see."

"I shan't get there alive, and my husband won't either," pleaded Feodosia Pavlovna. The Germans answered blandly: "Never mind, if you die your daughter can still work."

At the station, Feodosia Pavlovna wept and beseeched her sister: "Lena, we'll never get back from Germany. When the Russians come back, tell them about Shura."

So now Lena Pavlovna sits before me and tells the story of her sister's grief. She also tells about herself.

She is ten years younger than her sister Feodosia. As a girl she came to Gzhatsk to stay with her elder sister. There she met Sergei Dmitrievich Dmitriev, a worker. She married him and they lived well. They had one son, Vitya.

Before the war, Sergei Dmitrievich was stricken with a grave gastric disease. In a year the strong man of forty became an invalid. "Now I am the breadwinner," Vitya used to say.

First the Germans took away the cow, and in Gzhatsk cows are the basis of all well-being. They were no ordinary cows, but of fine Swiss stock which yield lots of milk. The townsfolk tried to hide the cows. But how can one hide such animals?

A German sergeant-major was billeted in their house. According to Elena Pavlovna, he was short, swarthy and malicious. No sooner did Elena go out of the house than he began to "amuse himself" by slapping helpless Sergei Dmitrievich's face. He would slap him for hours.

Vitya was fourteen, but looked not much more than ten. "If only the guerillas would come!" he would say to his mother.

One evening two drunken Germans broke into the house. They were green youths. They yelled, "Woman, come—let's go to sleep."

Elena Pavlovna shook her head reproachfully. "How old are you?"

One of them showed twenty on his fingers.

"And aren't you ashamed?" she asked. "I am forty-two."

The Germans laughed: "It's all the same to us."

They began to pull off her dress. She tore away from them and ran out into the street half-naked. As she ran she thought: "Now they will shoot me." And she told herself: "Let them shoot. I will not put up with such a disgrace."

Then came the portentous days when the Germans began to retreat before the Red Army.

A rumour swept the town. "The Germans are carrying off the children." Stolyarov's widow was frantic. Her husband had worked at the post office.

Everybody had known him. The Germans put him in a concentration camp and he died there of typhus. She had one child—a boy of thirteen. She tried to hide him. She buried him in the snow, but then became afraid that he would freeze to death. She covered him with hay.

But a neighbour came and said: "In Moskovskaya Street they prodded the hay with bayonets."

The Germans took away Stolyarova's son. They came to Belskaya Street to Lyudmila Kachevskaya's house and took away all her four children—she had two sons and two daughters.

The Germans proceeded on their way—from Petrova they took her son Mitya. From Besspalova they stole a daughter of fourteen. From Kazakin they took two boys—Nikolai, sixteen years old, and Yura, fourteen.

Elena Pavlovna saw disaster coming. She kept repeating: "If only our army would come in time!"

The sergeant-major gathered together all his host's belongings and gave the invalid a farewell slapping. Then soldiers came and grabbed Vitya. "Get away, woman!" they shouted when Elena clutched her only son to her.

Then the Germans proceeded to burn the houses. They poured petrol on the walls and the houses went up like so much straw.

Everything was destroyed—old mattresses preserving the impress of human bodies, furniture inherited from grandparents, photographs of grandmothers, grandchildren, relatives and friends.

Dresses were burning in the closets. Children's toys were burning. Life itself was burning. House after house, street after street went up in flames.

Thunder growled through the town. The Germans were blowing up big buildings. They blew up the school where the Olenevs had studied. They blew up the club where Ivan Kuzmich had worked as a cine-mechanic. They blew up the green-domed church where Feodosia Pavlovna had been married. They blew up the hospital where Lida had been treated.

They burned one village after another. They came to Mischino, where Ivan Kuzmich Olenov's wife lived with her five children. The Germans burned her house. They burned the whole village.

The woman and her children huddled in a pit amid the snow. They tried to warm themselves at the smouldering ruins of their house. The cold night fell and the children cried.

Stolyarova works at the post office. Stolyarova herself does not expect letters: her husband is dead.

And if any letters should come from Ivan Kuzmich Olenov, where should they be delivered? Nothing has been heard from Misha. Shura has been shot, the parents and Lida carried away to Germany.

And nothing is left of their house but rubble and ashes.

And old Pavlov, the centenarian, is dying in Borodulino. He is dying in anguish, in silence.

DIARY OF A LENINGRAD BOOK-KEEPER

By I. Zykov

In a large four-storey house in Leningrad, a house with dozens of flats and a spacious court with wrought iron railings, Peter Kotelnikov lives all alone. He is fifty-eight years old, and works as a book-keeper in the local bank.

All the other tenants left in the early days of the war. Some went to the front. Some were evacuated to the rear. Some died.

Only Peter Kotelnikov remained. It worried him to think of the building getting into bad repair. He decided to take care of it himself.

The court is well swept, the staircases are clean, Window panes shattered by bomb blast have been neatly replaced by plywood. He looked after the water-pipes during the winter, to keep them from bursting.

The house is all ready to receive its tenants. Now that the blockade has been broken, Kotelnikov hopes his old neighbours won't be long in returning.

During the siege he kept a diary. Yielding to my request, he shyly produced a small note-book with a black oilcloth cover, and gave me permission to publish the following extracts:—

21ST AUGUST, 1941. Everyone is crowding round the notices pasted on the walls. It's an appeal by Marshal Voroshilov and the Leningrad Soviet. . . . It's two months since the Germans crossed the frontier. People say if they're halted now it'll be a miracle. We must work this miracle with our own hands.

Some of my colleagues from the bank and I myself have been sent to build anti-tank fortifications. My wife Elizabeth came along with me. It must be very hard for her to dig deep holes and bury logs in them, but she is in good spirits, and looks cheerful. . . .

11TH SEPTEMBER. Again the siren, howling like a dog in front of a corpse. It's the twelfth time to-day. . . . The A.A. guns are pounding. Just now a bomb screamed hideously right overhead. A heavy thump, followed by an explosion. Shattered glass. Another thump, again and again. This time we've escaped. In the last three days ninety-one German planes have been brought down over the city.

8TH DECEMBER. I don't know whether it's a miracle or not, but for several months the Germans haven't made any headway. Quite the contrary. Our troops have pushed them back several miles. The city is cold and dark—no light, no fuel, no water. We carry water in pails from the ice-hole in the river. In our bank, though, it is just like peace time, counting, paying out money all day long. Our State is stable, and so is our Soviet rouble.

19TH DECEMBER. It says in the books that man needs protein, fat, carbohydrates, and all sorts of vitamins. That's not true. We in Leningrad get five ounces of bread each, and two glasses of hot water daily, and it's quite enough to live and work on. We have the Germans in front of us, the Finns behind us, the sea on the right, and Lake Ladoga on the left. That means there's no way of getting food through.

Yesterday I brought my bread ration home and gave it to Elizabeth. I said that for overtime work making hand grenades we get hot meals with meat, and that I wasn't hungry, and all the bread was for her. She believed me, because up till now I'd never told her a lie. She said, "Although you're aren't hungry, let's share the bread." But I refused.

1ST JANUARY, 1942. To-day's a holiday indeed. All the flats have got electric light. It makes us so happy. But I'm worried about Elizabeth. I looked at her by electric light and realised that she's all swollen. Apparently it's true what they say in books about fats and protein and vitamins.

13TH JANUARY. Our troops drove a fine wedge into the German lines at Tikhvin, preventing them from surrounding Lake Ladoga. Beyond Ladoga are our people, the Russians. The ice is solid now on Ladoga, and motor lorries in great number come over it to the city. We'll have bread now.

17TH FEBRUARY. Elizabeth is dead. The vitamins brought via Lake

Ladoga did her no good. It is a grief to me that I couldn't put her body in a pine coffin, in gratitude for our long life together. For pine is fuel. So I had to bury her without a coffin.

14TH APRIL. Our house is growing deserted. People are leaving with motor lorries, going back over Ladoga. I was offered a chance to leave. "You're not a young man," they said. "You ought to go into the interior."

That's exactly the point. I'm old, so where shall I go, and what seek? What happiness is there for me, but to live to see the bright day when Leningrad is relieved?

Things are easier now. The sun is high above the horizon, and there's more food. The Germans will never see Leningrad. There's nothing miraculous about it. It is perfectly natural. If the Germans had captured Leningrad, that would have been a miracle indeed.

28TH JULY. Visited an exhibition of paintings by our Leningrad artists. Here we are besieged, and yet we have exhibitions. It's cosy there, and clean, rugs, flowers, and lots of pictures. I don't venture to judge their merits, but one thing I realise: there has never been such an exhibition in the world, for neither Troy, Carthage, nor the cities besieged by Alaric and Attila had their painters.

16TH SEPTEMBER. The summer is drawing to an end. We're preparing for winter. We're pulling wooden houses apart to use as fuel. We've also got in stocks of grain. This winter will be easier. I'm all alone now in the house. I'm tenant, house manager, porter, carpenter and electrician rolled into one. I'm glad the house is in good shape. When the neighbours return they'll have somewhere to go.

18TH JANUARY, 1943. The Germans have been smashed up and driven far back. Our griefs and sacrifices weren't in vain. The blockade is over. Our sufferings are over.

When the Red Army men passed through the streets, I couldn't keep myself from shouting, "Drive them further, brothers! Give it to them for Elisabeth and all the little children, for all who have been widowed and orphaned!"

THE LARK FROM HEAVEN'S GATE

By Alexander Yakovlev

IT IS THE TIME OF THE SPRING BIRD MIGRATION. THE LARKS ARE SINGING HIGH over the fields. Flocks of gulls are circling above river and lakes, and the first starlings have already appeared.

The starling is a great favourite with Soviet country folk. Its arrival is a holiday, and it would be hard to find a house in any village or small town from Byelorussia to Kamchatka, from the Black Sea to the White, without its birdhouse, perhaps even two or three, especially intended for starlings.

Before the birds are expected in the spring, every good householder clears out the birdhouse and fastens new twigs for the starlings to perch on outside his house. Schoolchildren who are members of the Young Naturalists' Club prepare for "Birds' Day" and hang birdhouses in trees, on poles and tall buildings.

The starling is our welcome guest. "It's not spring without the starlings." That is what we always say in our country.

These birds know that we prepare for them, and they nest in the same houses year after year.

This spring they are flocking back to their old haunts, even to regions through which the war surged this winter. Here is a familiar river bend, here a wood and lake they knew. On the lake shore there should be a village; where every house had its starlings' home perched high above the garden.

The starlings circle over the lakeside, dart into the woods, return, still searching. These are their old haunts, this is their home, here they should find the nest where they first saw the light.

On all the long flight from Africa to the Soviet countryside they made no pause of any length. They made haste to return home.

But where is the old village? Where are the birdhouses now? Where happy homes once stood there are only black, unsightly piles of broken brick. The trees are splintered to the roots. No fences, no streets, no gardens, no people, all the good brown earth disfigured with deep pits and gutters.

Through this village the barbarians passed. They burned down houses and fences, deliberately ruined and defiled the gardens, killed the villagers or drove them into slavery.

And so the starlings wheel wildly over the ruined homes, the deserted fields and woods, seeking shelter and finding none. They take flight to the west, but the west is full of the thunder of artillery and the fearsome glare of burning villages. The Russian people are engaged in mortal combat. The Russian people are defending their land and their liberty to the death. The noise of that struggle startles the birds. They wheel eastward, and by thousands and tens of thousands they flock to new homes.

The eastern districts of the Moscow, Ryazan, Yaroslavl and Ivanovsk regions have never seen such myriads of starlings as this year. Vast territories in the Ukraine, Don, Voronezh, Kursk and Stalingrad regions have been laid waste. So the birds fly eastward, away from the desolation, seeking a place to build.

Swallows follow the starlings. They used to build under the eaves of country cottages, in the mouldings around church doors, in school roofs. Now they search for the old nests in vain. The churches, schools and houses are all burned down.

The small insect-eating birds, the robins, chiffchaffs, redstarts, fly-catchers, find no shelter either: the Fascists have hacked down their orchards and gardens.

Hitlerism has brought hunger and trouble not only to man, but even to the birds of the air. When in 1941 the German Army invaded our country and the front swept like a flaming tide from west to east, bird lovers observed an unusual sight: thousands of doves and pigeons flying east away from battle and fire.

Great numbers of storks, formerly rare guests in these parts, have appeared in the Moscow region. They are from the devastated countryside of Byelorussia and the western regions.

Twenty-two months of war have multiplied the number of birds. It is a long time since our country has seen wild geese, ducks, swans, blackcock, grouse, hazel grouse, and other wood and water game in such numbers as now. Most of the hunters have gone into the army, and the birds are breeding undisturbed.

In the Moscow Sea and Volga valley wild geese and ducks flock in countless numbers. The oldest hunters remember nothing like it. I speak, of course, of districts through which the front has not passed. Where fighting has been

heavy, and the woods have been trampled or burned, the wild birds have been frightened away or destroyed.

Of all the birds, the skylark is least disturbed by the war. Red Army men are astonished to see that he sings even at the forward positions.

Guns and mortars crash, machine-guns rattle, but the lark sings through it all, sings his full-throated song as though there were quiet fields all round. The ground may be ploughed up by shells, but look about you and you're sure to see a lark from heaven's gate, where Shakespeare put him, perched somewhere on a clod of earth turned up by an explosion.

CONTEMPORARY OF TREES

By L. Nikulin

BEYOND THIS FACTORY TOWN WITH ITS 60,000 INHABITANTS STRETCH THE FORESTS of the Urals with their deep ravines, their tall pines and dense underbrush, peaceful glades, deep blue lakes and game preserves.

The only high road connecting the factory town with the district centre runs through the forest. The houses are built of strong, rough-hewn logs; the windows are set high above the ground to prevent snowdrifts from shutting out the light of the short winter days.

The war has taken everyone from the villages except old men and women, adolescents and children—grave, taciturn, industrious folk. The earth here is infertile and grudging. Daily bread is not lightly earned. Even apple trees refuse to grow.

All this I learned from my companion, a doctor of the district hospital, who has lived in that region all his life. We sat on the high road waiting for a passing car to give us a lift. It was a Sunday. For a long time not a vehicle passed by. Only lone pedestrians would occasionally appear around a turning and disappear over the hilltop, after giving us a grave "Good day!"

At about five o'clock in the afternoon a tall man came in sight. He walked along the forest road with a quick, light step. On reaching us he gave us "Good day!" and sat down under a pine tree. His dark face was like old parchment; his expression was stern and impressive.

This pedestrian was very old. His easy gait and erect bearing had deceived us.

He leisurely drew out of a bundle an egg, a few grains of salt wrapped up in a clean rag and a chunk of bread. After rolling the egg over the ground he took off the shell, ate his lunch, then, brushing the crumbs from his knees, asked, "You're going to the district centre?"

"Yes."

"So am I."

"Where are you from, Grandpa?"

"From Kondrov, where I live."

By the meanest estimate, Kondrov was 16 miles from the district centre.

He must have sensed our surprise, because he smiled and said, "I am 94 years of age. I was born in 1849. In six years more I'll be exactly 100."

"By golly!" said my companion. "Sixteen there and 16 back! You're a marvel, Grandpa, I must say."

"My son is 66," continued the old man sedately. "He used to work in a

sawmill. But now he's been given an easier job. Our family have always been peasants."

"Isn't your name Veselov?" my companion asked.

"It is. Veselov, Vasily Ivanovich."

"I've heard about you. Pleased to meet you. What's your business in the district centre, Vasily Ivanovich?"

The old man did not answer immediately. He looked up into the sky. A shadow of a large plane glided again through the transparent clouds.

"I'm going to the centre for a newspaper."

"Couldn't anyone else go for you?"

"No one. My son Peter Vasilievich is busy sowing, my four grandsons are in the army, my daughters-in-law are also sowing. But what are 16 miles? I've walked farther."

There was a pause. Then he removed his cap and pulled a folded printed sheet out of the lining. It was a copy of the local district newspaper and had evidently passed through many hands. The old man handed it over to us carefully.

"Our fellow countryman," my companion read aloud. It was the caption under a portrait of a broad-shouldered, smiling Red Army sergeant.

I read a report about the exploit of Sergeant Alexander Veselov, describing a daring and dangerous reconnaissance operation far into the enemy's dispositions which had earned him a decoration.

I read aloud to please the hero's great-grandfather. "Sportsmen of our district," I read, "are well acquainted with their fellow countryman Sasha Veselov, who displayed rare physical strength and agility in peace time and has twice distinguished himself in battles against the base enemy."

The old man listened, nodding his head slightly. His face wore a proud, calm expression.

"He's a real Hercules," smiled my companion. "But then so are you, too, Vasily Ivanovich, at 94 years of age."

"Mustn't complain," said the old man as he got up. "I'm satisfied with my grandsons and great-grandsons. Only my son Peter Vasilievich has let down the family honour—at the age of 66 to ask for light work!"

He took his leave. Through tall, century-old pines passed the contemporary of the trees.

THE OPPORTUNIST

By Mikhail Zoschenko

THERE WAS ONCE A MAN WHO DID EVERYTHING THE GERMANS TOLD HIM, AND then some.

Here is his story.

* * * * *

A barbed-wire fence surrounded the camp. No one was allowed to approach. The sentries had orders to fire. There were 400 people in this camp, and the conditions were pretty ghastly.

Everybody slept on the ground whatever the weather. The food was vile—a plateful of some sort of skilly and a scrap of bread once a day. After a little

some prisoners took to going up to the barbed-wire purposely to make the sentries kill them. But after several had been shot the sentries got wise to the dodge, and stopped firing. They used their whips instead.

One day a dandified German officer, all shaved and perfumed, with a smart little cane, arrived at the camp. The prisoners were lined up and the officer made his wishes known.

"Gentlemen," he said, "according to the records there should be some artists among you. Will the artists please step forward? I have something to say to you."

It was true that there were some students from the Art Academy in the camp. They had been helping out with the farm work when the Germans surrounded the village. And now eleven young people stepped forward. The officer continued:

"Which of you is willing to undertake a most important task—to paint a portrait of our general? They wish to hang it at headquarters."

None of the prisoners replied.

The officer raised his eyebrows. "Gentlemen, you surprise me. I'm not asking anything out of the way. I'm only asking you, in your professional capacity, to paint a likeness of our general on a piece of canvas. Well?"

Suddenly one of the students spoke up: "None of us is a portrait painter," he said. "We paint vases, gardens, flowers and, occasionally, domestic animals—chickens, cats and dogs. But a portrait of a general—that would be beyond us."

"Rubbish, gentlemen," said the officer firmly. "Your words are simply an expression of reluctance. Remember, I could order you, force you to obey. But I'm not going to do that. Because I want a good portrait, a real work of art. And therefore I want the willing co-operation of an artist filled with creative genius. The man who consents will receive extra food, money payment and one glass of vodka a week."

With an unexpected movement a tall, pale young student called Seryozha stepped forward. The terrible conditions of camp life had told on him worst of all. Barely able to drag one foot after the other, he advanced and said: "I'll undertake to paint the portrait, sir."

All his companions stared at him dumbfounded. Someone said "Skunk!"

The officer smiled. "I congratulate you on your good sense," he said, and led Seryozha to headquarters.

In the evening Seryozha returned to camp well-fed and satisfied, with a white loaf in his hands. He wanted to share it with his comrades, but not one of them would touch it.

"We'd rather go hungry," they said, "than stuff loaves got by crawling to the general."

The next day Seryozha went to headquarters again, and again returned to camp in the evening, well-fed, beaming, even a little exhilarated. Apparently he had received his vodka ration.

One of the students walked up to him: "You're an eyesore. You are morally corrupt. You've sold yourself. You need never offer your hand to any one of us again. We shouldn't take it."

Seryozha said nothing, only covered his face with his hands and turned away.

He went on going to headquarters every day. The general was so pleased with the portrait that he had Seryozha brought from the camp and lodged him in a cottage. He gave orders that Seryozha was to have all the food he wanted, in the hope of getting the very best possible work out of him.

With all this good food Seryozha's strength soon began to return. He even started to put on weight. The portrait was developing into a really fine bit of work.

During the last sitting, when there were only a few details still to be added, Seryozha killed the general as he sat posing in the armchair, killed him with a paper-weight from the table, and strolled off.

Nobody thought of stopping him. Everybody knew him.

Seryozha made his way to the forest and joined a partisan detachment, with which he has remained ever since.

SEVASTOPOL GRANITE

By Leonid Solovyov

PROKHOR MATVEYEVICH VASYUKOV, AN AGED SEAMAN, SAYS HIS FAMILY IS THE oldest in the city, with the possible exception of the Biryukovs and the Varnashovs. The plane tree in the yard of his house on the Korabelnaya side was planted by his great grandfather.

Prokhor Matveyevich left his Sevastopol many times. He would stay away for anything up to ten years. But he always came back.

In 1920, having fought all through the Crimean campaign with Mikhail Vasilyevich Frunze, Prokhor Matveyevich vowed never to leave his home again. But fate intended otherwise. Sevastopol was occupied by the Germans. Now Prokhor Matveyevich lives on the Caucasian shores of the Black Sea.

He has signed up as a temporary resident, although the head of the town administration, respecting the old man and wishing to relieve him of extra worries and trips, suggests each time he meets Prokhor Matveyevich that he should sign up as a permanent resident.

"Thank you, no," replies Prokhor Matveyevich. "I appreciate your kind attention, but I am just a guest here in your city. My home is in Sevastopol."

The obstinate old chap has not opened his suitcases or bundles to this day. He insists on being ready at any moment for the homeward journey.

"I am just like that piece of Sevastopol granite," he said to me one day. "What granite?" I asked.

He was silent for a moment, twitched his moustache, then remarked with condescending disdain: "And you call yourself a man from the Black Sea coast! Why, that bit of granite may fall into your hands. And what will you do with it?"

Then for the first time I heard the legend of the Sevastopol granite. Later I heard the same tale from other sailors on board ship, from soldiers in dugouts.

This is what they relate:—

When the Red Army was ordered to evacuate Sevastopol, a marine unit covered the retreat. These men were the best and bravest of all heroes. Out-numbered by great odds, they fought like tigers for each firing position. May their glory be everlasting!

One must not think, of course, that all of them lost their lives. Some of them broke through to the mountains, where they joined the guerilla columns. Others reached the Caucasian shores on rafts and fishing boats.

Four of them sailed the Black Sea for over a fortnight, trying to reach

Tuapse in a small boat. One of them was dying. True to naval codes of friendship and honour, the marines had not abandoned their mate, wounded by a shell splinter in a Sevastopol street. They had picked him up and carried him on board. But they had no medicaments, no fresh water, not even a crust of bread. They kept alive on jelly-fish.

The wounded man grew weaker each day, and now he was dying. When the marines picked him up in Sevastopol, near the monument to lost ships, they did not notice that he had a stone clenched in his fist. An enemy shell had chipped it off a granite wall. Later, when dressing his wound, the three marines saw the stone and wanted to throw it overboard.

"Don't touch it," whispered their dying comrade. "Put it in my inner pocket."

He did not part with this rock until his last hour. He groaned and became delirious and continually asked for water. The youngest of the three men leaned overboard and scooped out a large, orange-striped jelly-fish. He tore off a piece of the slippery plasma, since there was nothing else to offer his dying comrade. The sun was scorching. For hundreds of miles around there was nothing but a smooth, sultry expanse of clear blue sea.

A few moments before the wounded man died he managed to speak a little.

"I thought I'd go back to Sevastopol," he whispered, "and put this stone back in its place myself. I intended to cement it where it belongs. But now I'm going to die. So you take it and put it back for me. It must be done by the hand of a sailor."

Towards evening the three sailors lowered the body of their comrade into the sea. There was nothing heavy aboard to act as a weight, and the body rocked on the waves as the boat drew slowly away.

The stone was handed to the eldest of the trio for safe keeping.

Towards the end of the fifteenth day at sea the marines heard the sounds of an engine overhead. A Soviet naval scout plane spotted them, and before long they were picked up by a cutter and rushed to hospital.

When the medical attendant took their clothing, she asked whether they had any valuables, watches or purses to turn over for safe keeping. The eldest took out the piece of granite.

"Here, keep this safe," said he.

The attendant was surprised, but did not attempt to argue, and the sailor was given a receipt with the particulars duly entered: "Name of article—Granite. Colour—grey. Weight—270 grams."

Three weeks later, the eldest marine, was discharged from hospital with permission to recuperate at home for a while. He refused leave, and asked to be sent to join a marine regiment at the front immediately. He persisted, so they let him go.

The Sevastopol stone was with him all the time. He was a marvellous sniper, and when he sighted a German the stone began to sear his heart and his blue-and-white jersey turned golden where the stone lay. Whenever he bagged a German, he put the empty cartridge case in a little suitcase.

Then one evening he crawled back to his dugout with a German bullet in his chest. When he died his friends opened his suitcase and counted the number of empty cartridge cases. There were 311 in all, and they were sent in a special parcel to his mother, along with the sad news.

The Sevastopol granite next appeared in the hands of a marine scout, a happy-go-lucky chap who searched for "live tongues" in the German rear just as if he was home in his own back garden. He even managed to get acquainted

with a girl behind the enemy lines. The unit commander was quite taken aback when one day his best scout returned from the enemy lines with a wife.

Well, this scout was wounded, and before being sent to a rear hospital, he passed the bit of Sevastopol granite to a marine in the signal corps. Then it fell into the hands of an artillery gunner, and finally landed in the pocket of a Black Sea airman. This young man brought down three Junkers in combat and rammed a fourth, when he ran out of ammunition. He was injured when he landed his disabled machine.

No one knows definitely who became custodian of the granite after that. Some say the snipers got hold of it again. Others maintain it is now on board a submarine.

No matter who has the stone—submarine men, artillery gunners, or naval pilots. It will not be lost. It is in strong, safe hands. It is on its way back to Sevastopol.

Would you like to see it? Then go to Sevastopol after the war and ask for Prokhor Matveyevich Vasyukov, on the Korabelnaya side—everyone knows him there. He will take you down to the shore. Near the monument to lost ships you will see the stone cemented firmly in its old place. And the old man will not forget to remind you that it was replaced by the hands of a sailor.

You will probably try it with your cheek. Perhaps it still retains its warmth.

THE ELUSIVE BOGDAN

By E. Gavrilovich

IMAGINE A SMALL TOWN SOMEWHERE IN THE UKRAINE. IT IS A QUIET SUMMER day. Herr Gebietskomissar (Nazi district commissar) is sitting cosily at home in slippers and nightshirt, thanking a benevolent fate for delivering him from the hell of war there in the east, for placing him in this town hundreds of miles from the front, where his work is confined to wrenching bread, butter, cereals and other wholesome foods from an unwilling population and sending them to Germany.

He is thinking that on the whole life is rather pleasant in this town without air raids, without partisans. The only trouble is getting the people to "volunteer" for work in Germany. They definitely don't want to go, they hide in the forests to avoid being conscripted. He even had to hang five of them in the market square as a lesson to the rest.

So sits Herr Gebiets, drinking coffee, glancing through the papers, gazing through the window into the street. Suddenly he hears a strange noise, a muffled shout. Then a single shot rings out. An adjutant, sent to find the reason for the disturbance, returns pale and trembling, gasping: "He's here!"

Herr Gebiets leaps to his feet and grabs a sub-machine-gun, but at that very moment the door is kicked open and an outlandish crew appears on the threshold. Some of them are dressed as German policemen, others are in S.S. uniforms, others wear well-made Lodz cloth suits with Ukrainian embroidered shirts.

Half an hour later Herr Gebiets is swinging on a pole, while near his house his unexpected visitors are giving back to the people the food the Germans stole from them.

An hour later a German motor-cycle detachment arrives to restore order, only to find the town as quiet and imperturbable as ever. Everything is perfectly in order, except that "Gebiets" is hanging with a rope round his neck, while half the small garrison are lying dead and the other half are prisoners of the guerillas. In the commandant's office, stuck impudently among reports concerning the progress of labour conscription, is a pencilled note: "Until we meet again—Bogdan."

Wires start humming and one *polizei* shouts to another through the receiver: "He's here." But Bogdan has vanished into the air. Some time later he will appear again far away from this place. He will blow up a railway, or attack a station, or wreck a train, or set fire to some storehouses.

Bogdan's group is a mobile partisan detachment, specialising in surprise raids. It is always in movement. Its activity is not confined to any particular area. Its men have marched thousands of miles.

Several times the Germans thought they had Bogdan's detachment securely in their pincers. Cautiously, methodically, they pressed the ring closer, making thorough search of the forest where the elusive Ukrainian was supposed to be hiding. The operation was planned with the utmost accuracy and precision. And when they closed in for the kill they found a pile of tin cans, the remains of a camp fire and a lone goat with a note pinned to its hair, "Until we meet again—Bogdan."

Meanwhile, Bogdan was being joyously greeted by the people of a village 40 miles away. He stayed for some time, organising lectures, dances and even stage performances all through the district. His men went from hut to hut talking to the peasants. The local priest read to his congregation the Soviet Information Bureau communiqués and Metropolitan Sergius' message.

Speaking of priests, there's an old priest, a native of Kiev, in Bogdan's detachment. When the Germans captured the Ukrainian capital, he left for a distant village. He made dexterous use of Holy Scriptures to attack the Germans in stinging, metaphoric expressions. The news of this novel interpretation of the Bible spread far and wide. Peasants came from miles round to hear his sermons. Then Bogdan arrived. The priest preached a final sermon in which he abused the Germans, this time most unequivocally. He left out all the scriptural metaphors and urged the people roundly to kill the invaders and burn down their storehouses. Then he went off with Bogdan's detachment.

Once the Germans nearly captured Bogdan. The partisans called this operation the "wet sack." This was how it happened.

In spring, Bogdan camped at the confluence of two big rivers far behind the German lines. He had guns and anti-tank rifles, which he used to sink ships and barges as they steamed past his hiding place. After 14 vessels had gone to the bottom all traffic was stopped and the Germans sent a punitive expedition on armoured launches. The partisans had been warned beforehand. The armoured launches were sunk and about 400 Germans were drowned.

Then the German Supreme Command formed a big expedition—consisting of an infantry division reinforced by two more rifle regiments and a tank regiment. They succeeded in approaching unobserved. Bogdan found himself caught in a triangle formed by the two rivers—in a "wet sack," as it were.

The partisans fought for two days and two nights, beating back repeated attacks by tanks and infantry. But the forces were much too uneven. The sack tightened and Bogdan seemed doomed. But he found a way out. None of his men rested or slept. Those who were relieved from the fighting for an

hour or so took axes and saws and cut down trees, dragging them at night towards the river. Then they returned to the fight.

On the third night Bogdan built a bridge across the river, negotiated a landing, attacked a weak enemy force holding the opposite bank, broke through and escaped with a supply train. The Germans entered the partisan camp to find the traditional goat with the traditional note: "Until we meet again—Bogdan."

Bogdan's detachment operates in the Western Ukraine, blowing up bridges, wrecking trains, destroying garrisons. They see with their own eyes the monstrous Nazi persecution of Ukrainians and Poles and the eagerness with which the people await the return of the Red Army. Some of Bogdan's men have even been inside Kiev, have trod its broken pavements, touched its ruined houses, spoken with its tormented citizens.

Bogdan gets on the Germans' nerves. After every large-scale operation there is an exodus of German officials back to Germany, with their wives, children, stolen pigs, cows, chickens and furniture. One wily "Gebietskomissar" sent delegates to Bogdan, promising an "armistice" if he would only move from the neighbouring district.

In winter the wandering partisans put up in villages for the night. In summer they sleep in forest huts and tents made from parachutes. In addition to minor missions, such as railway track mining, bridge wrecking, attacks on enemy vehicles, small garrisons and railway stations, Bogdan's men sometimes carry out major operations. The detachment's chroniclers give every operation of this kind a special name. We will describe one called "Partisan Cannae."

Crossing two rivers, Bogdan's men appeared in a district practically untouched by war. Their aim was to attack the district centre, which was held by a Nazi garrison 400 strong. All roads were cut during the night, and the town was assaulted in the morning. Heavy fighting continued throughout the day. One street after another was captured by the guerillas. The battle ended in the total annihilation of the invested German garrison.

The blow was so powerful and unexpected that it was rumoured that regular Soviet troops had broken through the front. Every German official within a hundred miles fled for his life.

"ALL'S WELL. LOVE, GEORGE"

By Vladimir Belayev

ONE APRIL DAY THIS YEAR CAPTAIN WILFRED GEORGE, OF CARDIFF, WENT ASHORE at a northern Soviet port and called on the harbourmaster.

"You've good men in this port," he said. "I know now why Hitler couldn't get you down."

"And you've a good crew, captain," smiled the Russian. "Don't thank us—it's all in the day's work. Tell me—is there anything else we can do for you?"

The captain shook his head. "Unless you could get a message through to my wife Ada. She's a war worker—lives in Cardiff."

"We can try. What do you want to say?"

"Oh, just 'All's well. Love, George'."

All's well.

It might have been very far from well. Let me tell you why.

* * * * *

That morning a number of Ju. 88's had raided the port area. One of them peeled off and made for Captain George's ship where it lay at anchor. A near miss—the vessel staggered, then righted herself. Another bomb struck to starboard. The splinters whined over the deck, but injured no one. The third bomb swished over the bridge, but completed its arc in the cold waters of the fjord.

The fourth half-tonner found its mark. Parting the deck, it passed below and buried itself in twenty-two feet of coal. Though dazed by the hellish howl of the thing as it smashed through the deck, the men realised their position in a flash. The yawning hole was an eloquent indication of the size of the bomb.

The captain sent a message ashore and ordered all hands on deck. "Anyone who wants to quit may leave right now. The boats are ready. Your lives are in danger, and you had better put off now. If there are any among you who would prefer to stay with me, raise your hands."

Twenty-one arms went up at once. The young Scots engineer, Robert Beily, preferred to stay. The first officer, Alex Howard Anderson, preferred to stay. Finley, the cook, preferred to stay. Coddling, one of the oilers, preferred to stay. Numelio, a South African Negro, preferred to stay. Sixteen more preferred to stay. The long procession disappeared below. They set to work with spades, a nasty job in the fitful light, potential death beneath them.

A little later a cutter made fast alongside. Three men came aboard and announced themselves—Levchenko and Panin, of the bomb disposal squad, at the service of their British friends. The third man was an interpreter, but he wasn't really needed. The language of labour is common to all hard-working men. Levchenko and Panin grabbed shovels and joined the toilers in the choking, dusty gloom.

Begrimed and sweating, they worked on hour after hour. There was still no sign of the cursed thing. A.A. guns thumped above. The Stukas were going to have another try. The ship reverberated. Down tumbled the coal, undoing the work of many hours. The guns fell silent. The men had to begin work all over again. Sleep was forgotten. Food was forgotten. They snatched an occasional sandwich and a swig of whisky.

After a little eternity the bomb lay trussed up on deck.

"Clear off, everybody," said the captain. "Nobody stays with the damned thing now except these Russian technicians and myself."

Nobody moved. The second mate murmured apologetically: "We'd like to be in at the kill, if you don't mind."

The seamen crowded around the two Russian workmen, watching their tender movements as they stripped the bomb of its detonator. The charge was removed and the cap was handed to the captain as a souvenir. The monster was unceremoniously pushed over the side. The anxiety, the weariness all disappeared in a harmless splash.

Panin and Levchenko had a bath, waved to the crew and descended to their cutter. They were wanted in the town.

In his cabin the captain admired his souvenir. It would do nicely as an ash-tray.

KARP MAKODZEBA DECLARES WAR ON GENERAL VON LEER

Karp Makodzeba is a famous Soviet guerilla. He wrote the following letter to the Nazi general on learning that a price of 10,000 marks had been set on his head:—

LISTEN HERE, YOU NOODLE. YOU DON'T OFFER HALF ENOUGH FOR MY HEAD. A beggarly 10,000 marks—do you call that a price? On my collective farm an English thoroughbred stallion alone is worth 15,000 in gold. And for me you're offering 10,000 in paper. That Hitler of yours, he won't go broke if he pays 100,000. He's used enough to getting his living without barking his shins.

As to you, you're a duffer yourself, though a general, and though a cocky fighter, yet a dock-tailed one. You're a blockhead in spite of your learning.

I, Karp Makodzeba, declare war on you, General von Leer; and when you peg out, I'll declare war on any Hitlerite who's going to come in your stead. Make a note of it. I'm not talking through my hat. I mean what I say.

And my sons are chips of the old block. If they get you, don't you cry quits—you shan't give them the slip. And my sons-in-law are a good match for my daughters. I gave my blessing to all of them when they went to the front—five sons and two sons-in-law. See how wealthy I am!

And when my children are on horseback, you can't unhorse them, nor untank them when in a tank. On a plane they're eagles, and they're devils in a fight.

A piffling 10,000 marks! Isn't your master a bit stingy? Maybe you'll add something? Cheap meat makes poor broth, you know.

I'm not a general, though you do me the honour of calling me "General Makodzeba" in your bill. My rank is much higher. I'm the people.

Have you grasped at last that you've made rather an ass of yourself? How can you buy a people?

But if it comes to that, it may be there is something of a general about me. When we seized your staff, and you had jumped out of the window in your drawers, it was quite a treat for me to peruse your plans and to throw them into the dustbin afterwards. And your full-dress uniform with the iron cross on its breast, my partisans dressed a scarecrow in it to keep the birds off the cucumbers in the kitchen-garden.

But it's for your maps I feel really grateful to you. Thanks awfully for your ticks and notes telling me all the whereabouts and the names of things, and where the aerodrome is. We have already managed to make ourselves quite at home there, as you yourself are aware.

Eleven brand-new planes, as if they had never existed! And eight tanks burnt up! D'you call that a flea-bite? And 65 tanks lying upside down? And 107 motor-bikes? And what happened to the combustibles, still green in your memory? And those 200 cars? And five bridges? And all those guns, horses and mines?

And after all that you think I'm only worth 10,000?

General von Leer, I'm the Ukrainian people. Your Hitler dreams of exterminating me, of sweeping me right off the map for the Fascist rabble, this plague of the twentieth century, to defile my land!

Never! Nothing in heaven or earth will ever tear me from my own land. You may crush me with tanks, you may bury me alive, you may twist every little bone in my body and tear asunder my every nerve; yet I'll rise again and walk all over my land, and I'll live and till the soil, and sing my songs!

I, Karp Makodzeba, declare you to be an outlaw.

The hand that will give you water to drink, may it wither!

The eyes that will take pity on you, may they go blind!

To punish me, you have hanged 50 guiltless people. To punish you, I shall hang 100 Fascists in Germany and you with them. Wherever you meet my men, a dog's death is in store for you.

Tell your Hitler that it is very painful to us to destroy Socialist property. We weep bitter tears when we destroy what we have created with our own hands. We cherished the Dnieper Electric Power Station as if it were our dear child. It stood like an emblem of our strength and our glory; and now it is no more.

They are roaring, the mighty rapids, they are roaring wildly again.

But we knew we had to do it. A new Dnieper Power Station will rise, even more powerful, even more beautiful, after our victory. And the Great Land of the Soviets will be proud of us, of her own children.

Don't expect mercy from us. Not one of you will get it. It's a fearful bed you've made for yourselves.

Not a single day of peace will you have, not a single peaceful night until we have rooted up all the evil you have sown on earth. Don't cry for mercy. There will be none for you.

THE SUN-STONE

By Pavel Bazhov

YOU MIGHT GO ALL OVER THE WORLD AND NEVER FIND ANOTHER SUCH PLACE as our Ilmen for stones. There's no denying it, for it's written down in every tongue under the sun. Covetous and given to bragging as the Germans are, even among them there were folks who had to admit that there were stones from all over the earth in the mountains of Ilmen.

Naturally, a spot like this wouldn't slip past Lenin's eye. And in 1920 these parts were declared by a special decree, written by Lenin himself, a government preserve. That meant that prospectors and wasters and the like would be taken by the scruff of the neck and the mountains preserved for what they call science for all times to come.

It looked plain and straightforward. As everybody knows, Lenin had an eye that saw what was going on under the ground, never mind on top of it. Naturally, he knew what was going on in the mountains. The only thing was, our old miners hadn't much faith in it; no such thing could ever be, they said. The war was at its height just then. Comrade Stalin had his work cut out hurrying from one front to another, and here all of a sudden this business of the stones came up. They tell the story this way:

It was about two men, brothers by trade: Maxim Vakhonya and Sadyk Uzeyev, who went by the name of Sandugach. One was a Russian, the other from Bashkir stock, and one thing had kept them together from the time they were youngsters: they'd been up and down the goldfields and mines since they could remember. They'd always been like that, folks said, the greatest pals; it was a fair wonder to see them.

It wasn't as if they were anything alike, at any rate, to look at. Vakhonya was burly, with a beard coming down his belly, shoulders on him you'd think

were props, a fist that was a sight to terrify anyone, legs you might see on a bear, and a rumbling voice that seemed to come from his boots. It wanted just a murmur of his to send the flies half-a-yard off. Though God knows he was a mild creature by nature, I might go so far as to say he was meek. If anyone made themselves a nuisance when he was tipsy, he'd say no more than:

"Clear out while the going's good, my laddie, else I might up with my fist and clip you one without thinking."

Sadyk was but a puny fellow, with a matter of about seven hairs for a beard, and those not in their proper place, even. Yet he had a power of muscle and was a first-rate miner. Which shows that you never can judge; a man may be nothing to look at, till it comes to work.

Sadyk liked his bit of fun, he was always ready for a dance and a song. And a great kouraya-player into the bargain. No wonder they called him Sandugach: it means nightingale in our parts.

So life threw Maxim and Sadyk in with each other on the same road. They weren't always working to put money in the government's and the owner's pockets. There were times when they got their share of pay-dirt. But it soon burned a hole in their pockets: as everybody knows, there was only one way to happiness for the old-time gold-digger: he went on the spree till it was all gone, then it was back to work again. But these two usually looked for a fresh place, where things might be livelier.

Neither of them were family men, so there was nothing to keep them in one spot. They put their few bits of things together, slung their knapsacks on their backs, took their tools with them and were off on the long trail.

"Let's go and look for some place where folks are well-off," you'd hear Vakhonya boom in his great voice.

Sadyk would march along cheerily with:

"Step out, Maximka, step out! Pay-dirt sticks to your hands in a new place, that everybody knows, and precious stones just get into your beard, you'll see that beard of yours weighing a whole stone of stones one of these days."

"It'd be more than they could do in yours, anyway—I bet you couldn't keep one in it," Vakhonya would say with a laugh that'd make you think of wood-goblins: "Ho-ho-ho!"

After this fashion they lived, these two brothers by trade. Up and down the mines and goldfields of the country they went: they saw the good day and the bad day; and it crippled both of them. Sadyk lost the sight of one eye at work, and Vakhonya got so hard of hearing in one ear, it was no use to him at all.

They'd been to Ilmen mountains many a time, of course. They slaved in Andryusha Labochov's mines, and whenever he went on the spree they left him for Gologuzov. Many a thousand did they put in Gologuzov's pockets. Not to mention Mrs. Pavelikha's: that hussy got a heap of precious stones out of them. That was where Sadyk lost his eye.

The two old mates happened to be in these parts when the Civil War started. They were working at Kochkar for Podvinchikha then, and as miners will, they took their guns and went to fight for the Soviets. The time came when Kolchak was driven to Siberia and then the man who was in charge of the political part up and said to them:

"Well, the Soviet Government thanks you old fellows heartily, but now, knowing that you've been disabled in your work in the bowels of the earth, you'd do better on the labour front, particularly since one of you having a blind eye and the other being deaf, it kind of spoils the look of the ranks."

The old miners took it a bit hard, but what could they do about it? After all, the man was right. They thought they ought to be going to have a look what was doing in the goldfields. First place they started for was Ilmen, and there they found a sight of folks, the worst kind of wasters, the kind that thought of nothing but money-getting: they'd ruin the whole mine in a minute if they thought they were going to get anything out of it. And behind all this rabble stood the trader; only, of course, he didn't show himself much nowadays.

So off they went to Kochkar, to Bishkil. But it was the same everywhere, and the old fellows were at their wits end, wondering what they were to do. They went to Mias, to Zlatoust, poked about and asked this one and that one, but they couldn't get any sense out of anyone.

"This is no time for that sort of thing," they were told, "besides the head office looks after that."

Just to try and find out about this head office business was enough to make their heads go round: there was one, it seemed, that dealt with copper, another with gold, a third with stones. And what was to be done, when there was everything under the sun in the Ilmen mountains? So anyhow the old men made up their minds.

"We'll go right to Comrade Lenin himself if it comes to that. He'll find time for us, never mind."

They got ready for the road, and as they were doing that they started an argument about one thing and came near to falling out. Vakhonya said they ought to take only precious stones with them, the kind people use for cutting. And some gold dust as well. But Sadyk had a notion they ought to take a sample of every stone because of this science they'd heard about.

They argued and argued, and at last they came to an agreement that each should do as he thought fit and fill his own sack.

Vakhonya went in strongly for those he liked best, and even went to Kochkar to get some blue stones and pink topazes. A bit of gold-dust, too, he took. A neat little bag it was he made up for himself, all of these semi-precious stones. But Sadyk went and filled a sack he was hardly able to lift, mostly with stones that none but a man who was well up in such things would even pick off the road. Vakhonya roared laughing when he saw it:

"Ho-ho-ho!" Give you a chance, and you fetch a whole mountain in a sack. As much as to say: here you are, Comrade Lenin, pick out what you think will come in useful and what you think won't."

This upset Sadyk, and he said crossly:

"You must be a terrible thick-head, Maxim, if you think that way of Dad Lenin. Science is what he goes in for, and doesn't care a hang about the market-price of stones."

So they started for Moscow. Naturally, they couldn't get there without accidents. Vakhonya got left behind at one station, and though Sadyk had fallen out with him and was feeling vexed at heart, still he grew very downhearted without his old mate, even to the point of ailing a bit. When all was said and done, they'd always been together, and now here was this big job before them, and they were parted. It was enough to upset anyone. Not to mention the minding and carrying of two heavy sacks, which was no joke for one person.

Vakhonya somehow managed to catch up with the train just as it was getting near Moscow, and those two were so delighted to see one another that they set all the passengers laughing till they were fit to split; what with their kissing and embracing of each other; it was a fair treat to watch.

They spent the first night on the station, as you might expect, and started out next morning to look for Comrade Lenin. They soon found him and marched straight in with their sacks on their shoulders. They were asked what they wanted.

"We want for Dad Lenin to see our stones."

"We come from rich parts that ought by right to be saved from wasters and rogues," Vakhonya explained. "But we couldn't make head or tail of things out there, so we've come here and we want to see Comrade Lenin without fail."

They were taken to see Lenin. They explained the ins-and-outs of it all to him, hurrying each other, interrupting each other till you couldn't hear either of them. Lenin listened for some time and then he stopped them:

"Look here, friends, supposing only one of you speaks at a time. So far as I can see, it's a matter of State importance, and it's got to be understood."

At this Vakhonya started to set out all his most precious stones and booming about them: this is from such-and-such a quarry, that's from a place called so-and-so; and how much they were worth in roubles.

Lenin asks all of a sudden:

"What are these stones used for?"

"Mostly for ornament," Vakhonya explained: "set in rings, earrings, necklaces and the like."

Lenin looked at them, admired them a little and sat thinking. Then he said: "They can wait."

Now it was Sadyk's turn. He undid his sack and emptied his stones on the desk, gabbling:

"Amazon-stone, Columbite-stone, Labrador-stone!"

Lenin was surprised.

"Why," he said, "you've got stones from different countries here."

"That's right, Dad Lenin! That's true for you! Stones came running from all ends of the earth. Stone-brain, too, we've got. And in Eremeyev quarry there's sun-stone."

Lenin couldn't help smiling at this, and he said:

"We can manage without the stone-brain, perhaps. You don't need to go to the mountains to find plenty of them. But the sun-stone would come in handy. Cheerful kind of thing to live with."

When Sadyk heard him talk like that, he tried harder than ever.

"Why's our stone good, Dad Lenin? It's because the sun warms it well. And I'll tell you for why: because just at this very spot the mountains take a turn and open out into the plain."

"Now that," said Lenin, "is dearest of all, that the mountains have turned to the sun and don't bar the way out to the plain."

Then Lenin telephoned to someone and bade them write down the names of all the stones, and draw up a strict decree to stop wasters and rogues doing as they liked and to declare the place a Government preserve. Then he got to his feet and said:

"Many thanks, old comrades, for taking all this trouble. This is a big thing you've done. A thing that concerns the State." And he went and shook hands with them, mind you.

You'll guess, I think, that these two were standing half-dazed. The tears shone like dew on Vakhonya's beard, while Sadyk could only waggle his miserable little beard and keep saying:

"Aye, Dad Lenin, Dad Lenin!"

KUBAN COSSACKS

By Pyotr Pavlenko

THE WORD COSSACK HAS SOUNDED INSULTINGLY IN GERMAN EARS EVER SINCE the Seven Years' War, when General Chernishov's cavalry took Berlin.

In 1812 Ataman Platov's Cossacks routed Napoleon's Bavarian and Saxon Corps. In 1914, 102 years later, Cossack forces led by Samsonov invaded East Prussia.

Yes, the Germans know the Cossacks, and the Cossacks know them. The memory of 1918, when the corrupt Ataman Krasneyov led Eichhorn's German forces to the Don, sharpened the sabres of Dovator's men when they struck behind the German lines before Moscow, of Belov's men when they scourged the Germans near Kaluga. Cossacks fought at Leningrad, Odessa, Sevastopol.

In the early spring of 1942 there was a tremendous rallying of Kuban Cossacks of the older generation to the Red Army. Greybeards wearing the Cross of St. George, awarded for distinguished service in the Tsarist wars, gathered to volunteer. Many of their sons were already majors and colonels; they, the fathers, joined up as rank and file fighters.

I was their guest for a few days. They were holding a sort of training course in sabre fighting. Nikifor Natluck, a Cossack from the stanitsa (village) of Labinskoy, a patriarchal old man, whose sons are prominent Cossack Red Army commanders, proposed that young Cossacks should be taught the immortal sabre blow of the famous Zaporozhye Cossacks.

"The German must be cleft from the shoulder to the groin," he said. "Anyone can cut off a head, or slice off an arm, but a Cossack must wield his sabre as his great-grandfathers did."

Another of the instructors was Trofim Njegoduyko, whose forefathers came with the first settlers from the mouth of the Dnieper in the time of Empress Catherine II. His great-grandfather knew Suvorov, who built forts on the shores of the Sea of Azov and formed the Kuban Corps.

Trofim's grandfather took part in the defence of Sevastopol in 1854-55. In the Turkish War of 1877 he crossed the Balkans with General Gurko, took Plevna with Skobelev, saw the minarets of Stamboul and the hills of San Stefano.

Trofim's father fought in Manchuria with Colonel Samsonov's detachment. In the 1914-18 war both father and son were in General Samsonov's army which broke into East Prussia, thus saving Paris from a German invasion.

Later, Trofim made the acquaintance of General Brusilov, in whose convoy he was, saw the Carpathians, where he slew many Hungarian Hussars, and came back with three St. George Crosses. In the days of the Civil War he fought the Germans in the Donbas in young Voroshilov's detachment, defended Tsaritsyn under Budenny, and followed later to Lvov.

Now, at 54 years of age, he is a senior sergeant, a volunteer in the Red Army. He fought near Moscow with the immortal Dovator, and later back home in the Kuban in Tseplyayev's motor brigade.

"I've known 16 generals in my time," he told me, "and honestly they all treated me like a brother."

"Why was that?"

He smoothed the flowing grey-black beard which spreads over his Circassian coat, and kept silent for some time, loving to keep our curiosity suspended in mid-air. Finally he said, "I do a Cossack's job well. What do they want from a Cossack? Fierceness. They expect him to deal heavy strokes. Well, I deal such strokes. A good stroke, boys, is never forgotten. It lives for ever."

Trofim's grandfather hewed through a Turkish horseman from shoulder to waist before Skobelev's face. All the papers were full of it at the time. In 1914, near Gumbinen, Trofim's father cut up a German in six parts with two blows of his sword. It was the famous "criss-cross" blow, and the fame of it drew young officers to study with Alexander Njegoduyko. He showed them how to cut a calf in two, or a piece of cloth thrown up into the air.

Trofim Alexandrovich has upheld the honour of his family. Back in the days of the Civil War his comrades presented him with an old, silver-hilted sword with an Arabian inscription on the blade: "I serve the eagle-hearted." The silver hilt is now covered with 131 copper dots like freckles. That is Trofim's score of killed Germans. Trofim Alexandrovich says that eight dots are missing; they dropped off by accident.

Not all the 139 Germans were cut up: many of them tasted lead bullets, others were destroyed with the rifle butt or crushed under Trofim's horse. With his sword he killed 43 Germans. One of his slashes he dedicated to his grandfather. "Even Grandfather Petro would have approved of it."

With one blow he cut a German officer near Rostov in three parts: head and shoulders, half the body and an arm, and the rest of the body.

Now he has been invited to show young Cossacks the art of sword play. Upright on his horse, he gallops spiritedly up to the clay figure of a German with outspread arms. The young folks have been hacking away unsuccessfully at this "German" since the early morning. But their swords have got stuck in the moist clay at the level of the heart, or they have struck off only the head, which of course cannot be considered a decent stroke. Even a child can strike off a head.

So 54-year-old Trofim Njegoduyko, with set teeth, dashes up on his russet horse. The sword glitters brightly in his hand. He rises in his stirrups, raises the blade, and the clay German falls in two pieces.

The young folk shout "Hurrah!" Trofim, reining in his horse, explains: "The hardest thing, my lads, is to cut clay. I can feel no hatred for a clay figure, and therefore there is no heat in doing it. Why do I cut it? Only for the sake of your education.

"But my heart's not in it. I feel no anger. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that it is easier to strike at a German. In the first place, he usually turns tail. So if you stick a sword into him he'll run up it himself. He'll cut himself up. In the second place, you've got to apply pressure along the length of the blade, not downwards. It's not the same as chopping wood.

"Use your imagination. Pretend that the German is very broad and you're cutting him open like a cake. Don't hurry. Take it easy, and everything will turn out well.

"Of course, psychology plays a part too," adds Trofim mockingly. "But it's none of our business if a German yells. If the Germans don't like it they should have stayed at home in Germany. But once they've come on to our territory, friend, crying won't help. Run, damn you, run up the blade!"

THE MINED "EDELWEISSES"

By Boris Lavrenev

IN THE FAR NORTH THE FRONT LINE STRETCHES ALONG THE UNFRIENDLY BANKS of a small but rapidly-flowing and powerful mountain river. Its waters never freeze, even in the severest winter, but pour down with a roar over black, ice-covered granite boulders.

In the German trenches on the west bank of the river are General Dietl's Tyrolese Alpine troops, who were driven here by Hitler to conquer the Soviet North. The Soviet Marines have cooled their zeal for conquest. Their bones pile up on the hillocks under the polar storms. There is no place hereabouts to bury them, for the only way you can dig out a grave in this thick mass of granite is to use explosives, and that's no simple matter.

And so over the precipices you see the ribs of Hitler's soldiers, spreading like the branches of some strange bush. Those who have managed to stay alive have dug themselves into little pits and cavities on the river bank, and there they are for the second year, afraid to show their noses.

The Soviet Marines have nicknamed these Alpine troops "edelweisses"—partly because of the artificial flowers attached to their headgear, and partly as a cutting hint that they are glued to the earth, as securely as the flowers on the mountainside.

The front is stationary. From day to day all that happens here is a minor exchange of fire. Occasionally Soviet sailors cross to the opposite bank to get hold of some prisoners for interrogation.

It was on such a raid that the Siberian, Pyotr Ryabov, distinguished himself. He used to serve in the torpedo department aboard a submarine of the Northern Fleet, but got himself transferred to the Marines.

The adventure of the "mined edelweisses" happened last December, when the Polar night was at its darkest. Pyotr Ryabov and four sailor comrades set off on a reconnaissance trek. They crossed the river and wandered around in the Germans' rear for a week, during which time they blew up an ammunition dump, destroyed several German aero-sleighs and killed about 30 Tyrolese.

The Germans drew in their skiers from all sides and succeeded finally in surrounding Ryabov and his friends. All Ryabov's comrades were killed. He managed to break through and get away in the snowstorm.

German skiers hard on his heels, Ryabov wandered on the stormy mountain sides, expecting any moment to slip into the abyss and be smashed to pieces. At last he shook off the enemy. But all his supplies of tinned stuff and biscuits had run out.

He moved towards the Soviet lines, hungry, exhausted and in tatters. Three times he tried to cross the enemy's lines, but enemy ski patrols and field sentry posts forced him to give up each attempt.

He struggled to the shelter of a little cave on the mountainside. There he chewed the leather of his shoulder-strap, but this seemed to make his hunger worse, and he decided to try to get some sleep.

But he found it hard to drowse off. His body was numb, and the hunger pains were terribly acute. He prepared to make a last attempt to cross to the opposite bank, when suddenly he heard voices nearby.

He pressed his body to the granite wall and waited, holding his rifle tight in his frozen fingers. From beyond a boulder emerged four Tyrolese, moving along quite carelessly, unmindful of danger. When they had passed the cave entrance Ryabov flung himself on the back of one Tyrolese, dug in his bayonet, drew it out again in an instant, and then with the butt of the rifle smashed in the head of a second Alpinist.

To the two remaining soldiers he shouted what were the only German words he knew: "*Halt, Waffen nieder, Hände hoch!*" (Halt, throw down your arms, hands up!)

The Germans, thunderstruck, obeyed this frightful, unshaven, ragged person. Ryabov then made one of them tie the hands of the other behind his back, and then himself tied the hands of the second.

He dragged the corpses into the cave, and drove the live mountaineers there as well. Then, having removed all traces of blood from the snow, he proceeded to examine his booty. The four tommy-guns didn't interest him, but in the knapsacks were food and a bottle of rum, and that gave him tremendous satisfaction.

Having appeased his appetite, he began to think of returning home. But a new difficulty arose. What was he to do with his prisoners?

Kill them? No, his honour as a Soviet sailor would not permit that. He would have killed them without the slightest compunction in battle, but these men in front of him were unarmed. Perhaps he could leave them as they were in the cave? But then they might crawl out and sound the alarm.

Then a solution occurred to him. Among the odds and ends that the Tyrolese had been carrying were several small delayed-action anti-infantry mines, which they had apparently intended to lay along the paths used by Soviet scouts.

Ryabov took one of these mines, placed the two Tyrolese back to back, tied their two pairs of fists together with a cord, and attached the end of the cord to the ignition device of the mine, after removing the safety catch. Then, gesturing eloquently, he explained to the scared Tyrolese that he didn't want to blow them up, but that they must sit quietly if they wanted to stay alive. Then, with a polite bow, he left the cave.

He got safely through the enemy's lines and reported to his company commander, who told him to go to sleep. But Ryabov became upset.

"But Comrade Senior Lieutenant, I can't," he said. "What about my two edelweisses? Surely you don't want them to go to waste."

He gave a detailed description of the Tyrolese, and of the place where he had left them. The company commander thereupon sent off two scouts, who discovered the mountaineers, half dead with fear and exhaustion, sitting motionless on the mine. In two or three hours more they would have dropped with fatigue, and been blown to pieces.

So it was with great satisfaction that they allowed themselves to be released from their awful neighbour, and without the slightest murmur followed the sailors through their own lines.

As for Ryabov, he slept for a solid 24 hours.

THEY WENT TO THE FOREST

By Alexander Avdeyenko

IN AUTUMN, 1941, WHEN THE RED ARMY HAD WITHDRAWN FROM THOSE PARTS, hundreds of villages of Polesye—Charnaya Rudnya, Zelyonaya Rudnya, Mokraya Rudnya, Sukhaya Belaya, Gornaya, Vesylaya Rudnya, to mention only a few—moved into the forests, to the protection of the marshes and the perpetual dusk of the thickets, to the inaccessible lairs of the beasts, into the arms of gloomy nature.

They left their homes rather than submit to the enemy. And so people appeared in the dense woods, and their voices filled the air. In common they set about their collective farm work, and soon the desolate places changed beyond recognition. All the clearings in the neighbourhood of the camp, all the spaces exposed to the sky and warmed by the sun were ploughed up and planted with rye, potatoes and wheat.

Andrei Borobulya had been chairman of the "Dawn" collective farm for eleven years, ever since its formation. It was thanks to him that before the war members of the collective farm were getting five kilograms of grain per work day unit out of the poor land of Polesye. In autumn, 1941, he removed the "Dawn" kolkhoz into the inaccessible woods.

In the winter Andrei Borobulya joined the partisans, and in the spring he was killed during a skirmish. His body was brought to the "Dawn" kolkhoz and buried there, and though dead, he still lived among the living. A plain mound covered with evergreen moss marks the grave. On it lies an oaken board with an inscription in burnt-in letters:

"Here rest the remains of a fighter for our human happiness, Andrei Egorovich Borobulya."

Accompanied by Andrei's brother and successor, Stepan Borobulya, I walk through the camp. A wrinkled woman is sitting at the fire, busily plaiting a bast shoe. It is Grandma Harpina, Borobulya's mother. A two-year-old lad, half naked, is throwing dry twigs into the fire, and laughing. The eyes of this child have never seen a German, but he has absorbed hatred for the enemy with his mother's milk.

In the centre of the camp, in a hole with sloping edges covered with iron sheets, Ivan Karas stands at the forge and pours sand upon a red-hot ploughshare. Ivan Karas, blacksmith, refused to let the Germans take his fire into thrall.

Here is a clearing carpeted with trampled grass, the edges rimed with snowless December hoar frost. Two rows of unbound sheaves are lying on the threshing floor. The girls Annushka, Mahora, Aksyuta, Natasha, Fenya and Vasilisa are threshing the grain with flails.

Quiet Fenya, with her golden hair and rosy skin, a beauty who seems to have stepped out of a fairy tale, works in silence. Happy will be the man to whom she will lift her eyes and to whom she will give her trustful smile. The eyes of the Germans have not seen her fairy-like beauty, Annushka's girlish blush, Mahora's curly hair, or Natasha's clear eyes. Their ears have never heard that tireless songster Aksyuta. These removed their beauty and happiness, their youth, their laughter, songs, caresses, love and hopes to the green darkness of the forests, to the wilds of the Polesye woods.

The threshing flails are singing in the girls' hands. The sheaves are rustling, and the grains of noble wheat, nurtured in the poor and meagre soil of Polesseye, are gleaming golden in the sun. The Germans have not cast their eyes on the wheat, they have baked no bread or cake out of it. Not a single ear, not a single grain of it has been in German bondage.

From somewhere comes the echo of wheels rattling on the dry road, and soon a waggon laden with sheaves emerges from the dark thicket.

"Hey, my bonny lassies," shouts the driver, as he wipes his perspiring horse with a wisp of straw and covers him with sacking.

"We're finishing, Grandpa Khariton," sings out Aksyuta.

Khariton has a snow-white beard, so clean you can count each separate hair. In his eyes dances unrestrained, sly, generous merriment. The Germans have not seen, have not defiled with their glances Khariton's wonderful Russian beard, have not outraged his serene, happy old age. Goodness and gentleness ooze like sap from his smiling lips, his wrinkles, his look, from everything he does.

"You must have got tired. Now you, Mahora, stand aside a bit, get some rest!" Grandpa Khariton grabs the smooth dark flail from the girl, grunts, and the antediluvian peasant implement begins to flash in his clever hands.

In shacks within the forest, hundreds of pine doors and window frames, sashes, oaken blocks, birch beams are kept, all of them the work of the old man. Two years have passed since the Germans broke into Polesseye, but the old man has kept to his job, accumulating his wares.

In the future village of Vesjolaya Rudnya all the people who have lost their homes will look through windows, enter through doors, dine at tables, sit on benches, and sleep on beds made by the old man. He is so ambitious that, if he could, he would rebuild the entire village, from the foundations to the chimneys, with his own hands.

It is not in marshes and bogs, not in dark forests that the people of Polesseye are living, but on the bright pinnacles of human dignity, valour and heroism.

It is a December evening. The camp has quietened down. The large fires have gone out. Birch twigs are crackling on the hearth in Borobulya's home. Mikola's calm little face is pressed against his mother's swarthy cheek, and both are asleep. His mother Catherine's silver earrings reflect the merry flame on the hearth.

The quiet of the night is interrupted by galloping hooves. It is the messenger for whom they have waited these two years.

Yesterday the Red Army liberated their native villages! The camp comes to life in a trice. People begin to tie bundles, fill sacks with flour and grain, fires no longer needed are put out.

In the morning the procession sets out over the frost-bound ground. It bustles, bursts into laughter and sometimes into song. Grandpa Khariton, with his new felt boots preserved for this very occasion, with bare head and white beard smoothed out above his sheepskin coat, marches at the head. In his hands, black with constant toil, he carries an oaken frame with a certificate stating that their land is secured to the collective farm in perpetuity.

The way is long, through forests and marshes, over meadows and streams, but Grandpa Khariton carries his oaken frame as a banner aloft over his bare head.

Annushka carries her year-old child. Both mother and son are flushed, their rags fluttering in the December wind, their dark eyes filled with sunshine.

Grandma Harpina, her head wrapped in sackcloth instead of a kerchief, in bast shoes, leaning on a staff, is sprinkling the road with tears of joy. Her fellow villagers try to persuade her to ride on the waggon, but she shakes her head, brandishes her stick, and mumbles something with her toothless mouth. She insists on walking the whole long road of the return on her own legs. She wants to drink this long-awaited happiness drop by drop.

A red cow with a white star on her forehead picks her way cautiously over the ice-bound road. No one is leading her. Meekly and trustfully she follows the people who have fed and caressed her all her life. Volchok, a little dog now runs ahead, now rushes back, barking and yelping. He, too, feels that it is the homecoming. Only the children sit on the waggons, on top of pillows, pots, pans, pails, and kegs of pickled vegetables.

The new silver-ornamented saddle of the Magyar general creaks under the heavy body of Stepan Borobulya. The partisan chief swings softly in the saddle. His face, with its high cheekbones, under the tall fur cap is shining.

People exchange glances with Borobulya, among themselves, with the pine trees, the sky, the sun. Their faces shine with the sun.

A passer-by meets the procession at the crossroads. He does not ask anything. Everything is clear: who the people are, whence they come, whither they are going.

In their hands, on their shoulders, in their eyes, the people carry their greatest and brightest treasure: the happiness for which they suffered, for which they wept, of which they dreamed—the joy of returning to their homes, to their land cleared of the enemy.

THE ROPE

By Vladimir Kozin

"IT'S SO MISERABLY COLD, WE ALL WISH WE WERE BEARS. THEN WE COULD spend the winter hibernating in our lair and sucking our paws," wrote Frau Martha Mueller to her husband, Corporal Mueller, on the Russian front. But Corporal Mueller was taken prisoner, and Frau Martha's letter fell into the hands of the Cossack Kukurenko.

He was highly diverted. "I didn't know I was bear-hunting," he laughed. "I come from the steppes, and I am not familiar with the ways of the woodlands."

Kukurenko was a member of a platoon of Kuban Cossacks. His speciality was crawling. He was an expert at scouting through the mountains and steppe-land, where you can see a horseman three miles away. Now his platoon was operating in lowland forests, and he felt not too confident of his powers.

"In the steppe the vast expanses give good cover to a man," he explained, "but in the forest you cannot hide. Before you know where you are you get caught in a branch, raise a riot and bring trouble on everyone."

One night last autumn his commander ordered him to bring back a senior German officer alive and unharmed, or not more than lightly wounded.

To avoid making any sound in the forest Kukurenko took nothing along except a soft woollen rope and a dagger. He left at dawn and returned exactly three days later, riding an unsaddled horse and leading a saddled one behind. Mounted on the saddled horse was a German officer in visored cap, with a well-

fed face. When he saw me, Kukurenko said: "I find I'm not so bad at forests after all."

Kukurenko usually told me his stories in monosyllables. They were very brief stories: "So I did crawl. So I spotted him. So I took him and dragged him here."

I had to question him to get some of the details. "Comrade Kukurenko," I asked, "why is one horse without a saddle?"

"Sorry, bartered it with a forester for the rope! A ruined rope I had! That night I tied up one fat, prosperous-looking German, and early morning, when I dragged him from the hollow of a tree, it turned out that he had deceived me: although he stank with perfume he was no officer at all. It was a common swindle!

"I spied him at night. He was all alone in a house, bathing in a big tub by the light of a kerosene lamp. When he had bathed he sprayed himself with perfume. I rather liked it.

"There is a high German officer,' I thought. I killed the sentry and the German took to the woods without any clothes on. Got him into a hollow oak. At dawn I saw he had chewed through the rope, but could not get out of the hollow. So I said to him: 'Come on now, crawl out, you bear, and let me see how you do it.' I was furious about the damaged rope. Then I grabbed him by his untied legs and hauled him on to the grass.

"At this he beamed and said in pure Ukrainian: 'Is this fair?' I did not stop to speak to him, the traitor that he was! He had served the Germans as an agricultural overseer. I tied my rope into a loop and hanged him on the oak.

"Then of course I had the job to do all over again. During the day I did a bit of reconnoitring and then crawled into a chicken coop on the outskirts of a village. The Germans had long ago eaten all the chickens and the coop was the safest place for a snooze. I slept like the dead.

"In the early morning, when I woke, I saw a high German officer with an orderly riding past my coop. 'Cossack's luck!' I thought, and began to imitate a rooster, yelling at the top of my voice. All we Kukurenkos were known in Kuban as splendid cock imitators. That senior officer of mine held his horse, and sent the orderly to fetch the cock for breakfast. The orderly began to creep into the coop.

"I finished him off and again began my cock-a-doodle-doo. Then the officer himself got off his horse. I kept on crowing until he got up to the door, pretending I was just going to fly out. The officer got frightened. He spread his arms in front of the coop to catch the cock, his eyes goggling. He had a well-bred face too, only with the expression of a country fool on it.

"I knocked him on the forehead, tied him to the saddle, mounted his horse, and we galloped to the forest. The orderly's horse followed. I knew it would follow us.

"In the woods we met a forester. He lives there in a mud-hut under a tree-stump. You'd never notice it. I asked him for a rope. 'This is a high German officer,' I explained. 'He has to be tied to the saddle. See, he cannot hold her head up.'

"The forester, he wasn't too friendly . . . 'It's no good asking me for a rope,' he said. 'The guerillas have taken all the ropes I had. Why don't you Red Army men bring your own ropes?'

"We argued. Then he said he'd trade me a rope for a horse! Imagine it! The black-hearted speculator! I told him what I thought of him. We began

to bargain. Finally he produced an old rope from under the tree-stump and I gave him the orderly's saddle. The forester said he'd use the leather to make a pair of boots for the winter."

NEW PASTURES

By Vladimir Kozin

I MET "BEAUTY" ON A STATE FARM NEAR THE OKA RIVER. THE FARM DIRECTOR, a stern-faced, disabled war veteran, told me her story.

Before the war this pure-bred Holland cow was famous for her milk yield throughout the whole Chernigov region of the Ukraine. In those days she led a quiet life, uneventful except for an occasional visit to Moscow for the Agricultural Exhibition.

Then came the war. The Chernigov State Farm evacuated eastward. On the way the dairy herd was repeatedly bombed by German planes. But the most terrible part of the journey was not the bombs, or the machine-gun fire, or the hot dusty war-torn roads, or the lack of fodder and water.

The most terrible thing of all was that the cows could not be milked on the way. It was impossible. Beauty's tender big udder became swollen. It grew to an enormous size and became diseased. She could hardly move her hind legs.

She stopped often and mooed piteously. But the war drove the people mercilessly eastward. They could not wait. The herd thinned, but plodded on. Beauty could not be left behind. Her milk spoiled, her teats toughened, her udder grew hard as stone.

Her eyes, which became large and human, expressed her suffering. Then sores broke out on her forehead. Her shoulders and haunches, once so sleek, became covered with mud and dust. Her legs oozed blood, her hooves dried and cracked.

She had to be carted the last part of the way. She could not stand on her legs. She couldn't even moo.

The remnants of the Chernigov State Farm were allotted land in the Ryazan region. Everything had to be started anew.

"We hadn't many cows left," the director told me. "Some equipment was saved, but important parts were missing. Our trucks were damaged and we had no fuel. There was no fodder. But we decided we must live."

They began to piece the farm together out of odds and ends. Not a thing was wasted.

"You've seen my motor-car?" asked the director. "No mechanic anywhere could tell what make it is! I spent six months collecting parts for it.

"You've seen our shippens? I designed and built them myself. Before we trekked east I knew nothing about building. And you know our chief tractor driver? That splendid man, when he first came, couldn't do a thing. He was suffering from shell-shock and had come to us to die. But we gave him medical treatment, fed him and trained him.

"Our superintendent used to be a tankman. He lost his right arm at the front. He organised tractor courses for all our people, and now we've got a large area planted and many fodder crops."

He invited me to a banquet at which awards were handed to the best milkmaids. The feast was set out on long tables: pies, cold ham, tomatoes, onions,

cucumbers—the State Farm has a rich garden. At the tables sat the cowmen, the milkmaids, shepherds, stablemen and tractor drivers. There were more women than men. A few speeches were made. Then the women sang songs. The banquet ended early, because the farm begins its new day at sunrise.

After the banquet I strolled over the meadows with Stepanida Loginova, the best milkmaid. It was dark, and the farm buildings were blacked out. A plane droned above the clouds. The beams of distant searchlights crossed each other faintly in the autumn sky.

“During the summer two planes were shot down directly above our farm,” remarked Loginova calmly. We went along to the shippen.

It was warm and peaceful there. The windows were shut tight. There was a smell of cow dung, hay and milk. The cows lay in a row on clean straw.

“There’s my Beauty,” said Loginova. “What a time I had with the poor thing! I had to massage her udder regularly for three months until it came to life again. I cried enough over her teats. Perhaps it was on account of my tears that they revived.”

“Does she give much milk?” I asked.

“Three and a half gallons a day.”

Beauty looked at us with big bright eyes.

MOUNTAIN HORSES

By Vladimir Kozin

THERE THEY WERE IN ALMA ATA¹ GOODS YARD, THEIR HEADS POKING INQUISITIVELY out of the trucks—two hundred fine horses from the high mountains, of Kirghiz breed crossed with English stallions, all untrained.

A tall young woman with a fine face and large, childish eyes was talking to some railwaymen. They introduced me to her: Nina Shiryaeva.

“She brought them all the way from South Kazakhstan,” one of them said.

I could hardly credit it. She was such a slender young woman, not particularly strong—certainly not at all tough looking.

“Did you have a hard time with them?” I asked.

“I like horses.” That was all she said. She seemed to think it explained everything.

She was the wife of the director of a stud farm in the remote mountains. The day when the 200 picked horses were due to be sent to the Red Army coincided with the first day of the mowing. The director was worried. His chief stableman had gone into the army. His head keeper was ill.

“I’ll take them,” said Nina.

From the way she speaks about it, it might have been a mere hundred yards down the lane. But actually the road from the high pastures to the nearest Turksib railway station crossed mountain streams, canyons, passes, wild valleys, lonely plateaux and desolate sandy steppe. The horses were young and half-wild. They knew nothing of the world except the mountains. They had never even seen a man-built road.

Nina Shiryaeva drove them from behind, riding her favourite black pacer. A trusted gelding led the column. It took them seven days to reach the railway station. The worst moment of the trip was on the Tur-Agyr pass, where they

¹ Capital of Kazakhstan in Soviet Central Asia.

met a string of lorries going in the opposite direction. The horses and lorries confronted each other at the top of the pass.

The Red Army drivers sounded their horns. The horses were terrified. They had heard thunder in the mountains, wind in the gorges and the howling of wolves in snowstorms, but they had never heard so dreadful a sound as that.

Even the old gelding at the head of the column became confused. He turned and galloped back down the pass. The driver of the first lorry got out of his machine, leaned against the door, and laughed.

But not for long. "I rode up to him and swore at him so hard that he was surprised," explained Nina. "Then I galloped after my horses."

They had reached the top of the pass shortly after dawn. It took her the whole day to catch the horses. Shepherds and other workers on a nearby experimental farm helped.

"Without them I'd have been done for," said Nina. "It was a terrible business. Even harder than loading them into the railway trucks."

The trouble was that even the wise old gelding disapproved of the train. It was his job to enter each truck, so that the young horses might be reassured, and follow him. But he stopped dead in front of the gangway and refused to budge, as if to say, "Oh, no! You don't trick me into doing that!"

He was cajoled and patted. He was offered sugar. Nina, whom he knew and trusted well, walked into the truck and invited him to follow. He refused.

Then he had simply to be dragged in with the aid of a device known as "urutka" in South Kazakhstan. She showed it to me. It is a short, thick staff with a leather noose at one end.

It's a rough method, but it works. The noose is attached to the horse's upper lip and tightened. This causes the horse considerable, though momentary, pain, and for the time being he loses his power to resist.

So inside a few seconds the argument was over, the gelding had solved his difference of opinion with Nina, and was amiably escorting his nervous young charges into their places. On the journey the horses behaved perfectly, even seeming to be soothed by the rocking of the train. They arrived at Alma Ata in perfect condition.

I begin to understand why the railwaymen at Alma Ata look at Nina Shiryaeva with such respect.

THE WILD BOAR HUNTER

By Vladimir Kozin

ISMAIL MAMEDOV, AN AZERBAIDJANIAN TURKOMAN, IS A NATIVE OF THE VILLAGE of Belokan, on the borderline between Azerbaidjan and Georgia. Before the war he was watchman at a collective farm. Autumn was his busy season. For in autumn he had to be constantly on the lookout for the wild boars which came to rob the maize fields.

The wooded hills and valleys around the village were over-run with these animals. When the crops were ripening they became very daring. At dusk they came down to the meadows, and Mamedov made terrible noises with rattles and drums to frighten them away. Sometimes he fired his gun at them. That scared them, but only for a time. Soon they would be back again, devouring and trampling down the crops.

Mamedov became a very good rifle shot. Sometimes he would shoot as many as ten boars in a single night without wasting a single bullet.

The collective farm was very grateful. He was presented with a watch, a rug to keep him warm when out on guard on autumn nights, and a new rifle. These gifts were "for meritorious service in guarding the crops and delivering the bristles, hides and fat of many wild boars to the State."

When war broke out he was called up and enlisted with the transport service. He was placed in charge of two mules and a cart. He looked after the animals diligently, and his cart brought the Red Army anything it asked for: from bales of hay to companies of actors.

He was attached to a cavalry unit. One day the transport column was attacked by German bombers. Excitedly, Mamedov lashed his mules and made for the shelter of a nearby ravine. The cart struck against a stone and capsized.

When Mamedov came to his senses he saw that one of his mules had been killed; the other was lying in a pool of its own blood, with two of its legs broken. He had to shoot it.

He was standing gazing sadly at his dead mules when the German bomber came back. He lifted his rifle, aimed, and brought it down. For this he was awarded a medal—"For Heroism."

He was given a new cart and two horses, one bay and one black, which were very skittish and good-natured. They were the best cared for animals in the whole cavalry division, intelligent and well-trained. The divisional commander knew them personally.

Those horses saved Mamedov's life when the transport column was attacked by a Rumanian cavalry squadron on the Don steppes. Mamedov, who was tearing along in his cart, was pursued by seven Rumanian cavalymen.

The horses flew like the wind. The cart was hidden in a cloud of dust. The Rumanians could neither shoot nor overtake him. At last he reached a ravine and drew up to wait for them. His hands, though trembling, missed the target only once. He picked off four of his pursuers. The three others galloped away.

Then he went to collect the horses of the four dead men. "They were nice animals. I liked the look of them," Mamedov explained later to the commander. "And I couldn't help thinking that for such shooting the collective farm would have given me another silver watch."

He was awarded a second medal "For Heroism" and the army sent him to be trained at a school for snipers. He was not entirely happy. He had reckoned that they might let him have one of the Rumanian horses for himself. He begged not to be separated from his animals.

However, he agreed to go to the snipers' school, and now he is one of his most brilliant shots in the cavalry corps. A few days ago he made the seventy-first kill.

"It is good," says Mamedov judicially, "but not good enough. I shoot these Germans, Rumanians and Hungarians best in their faces. When I get tired I say to myself, 'Pull yourself together, Mamedov. Those German hogs are still trying to poke their snouts into your maize fields.'"

SAILOR'S GLORY

By Vladimir Kozin

ARTYOM NIKOGOSOV, AN ARMENIAN FROM THE KARABAKH HIGHLANDS, IS AN old friend of mine. I first got acquainted with him on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

He has two nicknames: "Artyom-who-was-shot" and "Artyom-fear-horses." He earned the first nickname during the Civil War. He was serving in the navy, and fell into the hands of the whites. They stood him on the edge of a precipice and fired a revolver shot into the back of his head. The bullet entered his neck and emerged beneath the right eye.

For two days he lay at the bottom of the gorge; then recovered consciousness. He crawled to a roadmender's hut and the roadmender nursed him back to health.

He earned his second nickname in the period of economic restoration after the Civil War. He was put in charge of several truckloads of horses travelling from the Aspheron peninsula to Derbent on the shores of the Caspian Sea, where fruit and vegetable gardens were being laid out to supply fresh produce for the Red Navy sailors.

Artyom was given enough fodder for a two days' trip, but the railways were still in a state of comparative chaos and the journey took five days.

There was nowhere to get fodder on the way and the horses began to starve. They gnawed the wood of the stalls and trucks and then began to gnaw each other's manes, forelocks and tails. On the fifth day they looked so hungry and terrifying that jovial Artyom took fright, and as a measure of precaution took refuge on the roof of one of the trucks. When the train arrived at the vegetable farm, the sailors almost had to carry the horses from the cars. After that Artyom seemed to lose all interest in horses and took to vegetable growing.

Then his wife died of Daghestan malaria, leaving a two-year-old son in his charge. But the Caspian naval flotilla took care of the youngster, who grew up on a gunboat among a crowd of hefty, weather-beaten, kind-hearted sailors.

The boy's name is Arshak. I met him in Leningrad about a year before the outbreak of war. He was a sailor on a Baltic submarine.

The Government of Turkmenistan were "patrons" of this submarine. The Academy of Sciences arranged a conference in Leningrad to discuss the productive resources of Turkmenistan, and many Turkmenian notables attended. The submarine crew came to town for the occasion, and on the October Railway Station formally greeted their patrons from the distant sultry Republic.

To the music of a lively orchestra, the Red sailors paraded on the platform before the members of the Turkmenistan Government and other distinguished visitors in their red Turkmen robes. How superbly they marched, with a firm restrained tread, in perfect rank, each grasping the polished strap of the rifle slung over his shoulder.

Artyom Nikogosov was there, as proud as could be of young Arshak. I was delighted to meet him again. Since the Civil War he has prospered greatly, and is regarded in Turkmenistan as an expert on Egyptian cotton and vegetable growing.

He grasped me by the shoulder and cried: "Look, there's my son Arshak. Look, he is the very spit of his father. My word's honour, the very image

of his father when I was a young man. May my head burst like a ripe tomato!"

In the front rank on the extreme right marched Arshak, a tall, black-browed sailor with a solemn look on his young face.

The other day I had a letter from his father telling me that Arshak had distinguished himself in action and had been recommended for an award.

He went on to say: "I keep thinking of what a spit and image of his father my son Arshak is, and get no end of satisfaction out of it. But this is no time for such thoughts, may my head burst!

"I have decided I must do something special in honour of a son like that, and so I'm going to raise a new sort of early tomato. I am doing it by cross-breeding. If fortune favours me I shall call the new sort "the sailor's glory." So it shall be, my friend Vladimir—a new sort of early tomato called 'sailor's glory.' "

MOUNTAINS AT NIGHT

By Vladimir Kozin

1. *The Storm*

THREE OF US WENT ON A RECONNAISSANCE TRIP—LIEUTENANT KURBANOV, A Turkmenian from the Tekinsky oasis, cavalryman Torpashev and myself, a military correspondent.

I rode a Karabakh stallion called Schamil. Kurbanov had an Anglo-Donchak horse. Torpashev was mounted on a dark bay of Kirghiz breed, frisky and alert, like a frontier dog.

We started out at dusk. Our job was to cross the mountains and to reconnoitre the far-distant flat woodlands occupied by the Germans.

From our headquarters a narrow mountain path led down to a wide gorge, from which came the noise of a swirling river, now loud, now soft.

Torpashev led the way. All his life he had lived with horses. When he was called up he was working as chief groom at the Moscow Hippodrome.

The southern side of the gorge was bare: nothing but sun and the rocks. On the other side were occasional green patches. The whole slope was covered with yellow and lilac flowers, orange foliage and dark-green fir trees. Now and then the evening clouds cast their shadows over everything. The whole scene was a flourishing one, from the blue sky to the foot of the mountain and the long, twinkling river.

The sun was sinking behind the village where our staff headquarters were situated. We were bound for other mountains, other hills and rocks. We were going into danger—that was our duty. We were going into loneliness. Before us was uncertainty, and the three of us.

We passed a Kazakh patrol. The Kazakhs and their steady horses were hidden in the low bushes behind a red rock. A loud whisper came from behind the rock. Kurbanov's Anglo-Donchak jumped aside. Kurbanov gave the password and stroked his horse. A sturdy Kuban Cossack, with a slow smile on his big, childlike face, emerged from hiding. After a short chat the red rock was left behind us.

It was getting dark. We put on our burkas, and were silent. The winding mountain path grew indistinct. The horses' hoofs struck blue sparks from the stony path.

Suddenly and momentarily the gorge opened out.

Before us was a leafy forest, damp with evening dew. The rocks that had hemmed us in gave place to the trunks of oak and beech trees. The horses' hoofs made a soft, padding sound and the long branches brushed our saddles, faces and chests. I pushed my Cossack hat forward over my forehead.

Soon the forest thinned and was no more. We came upon a grassy plateau. There was a strong smell of milk and warm wool. Nearby was a flock of sheep and lambs: but no barking of dogs or shepherd's fire. The mountain dwellers' black-out was perfect. Even the stars in the heavens were not lit. The huge, heavy sky leant towards the plateau. The horses ambled slowly.

Then the gorge closed in again. The black air was quite still. I could smell the sweat of the horses.

We waited while the animals drank from the powerful stream which surged and swirled over the stones at the foot of the gorge.

Suddenly there was a clap of thunder. Hastily we urged our horses towards the zig-zagging path which clung precariously to the inner slope. The rocks gave out warm air. They jostled close together, crowding the path to the very edge of the precipice.

The horses began to step more cautiously. In a sudden brilliant flash of lightning I saw the stony path at the foot of the rocks, the burkas of my friends, the horses' tails, the suddenly-lightened gorge with its distant, fantastic fir trees, and the mountains mingling with one another in the distance.

The edge of my burka rasped against the rocks. My Karabakh braced itself. Ahead of us was complete darkness. I thought I could see the tail of the Khirgiz horse in front of me, but it was pure imagination.

Then there was a second streak of lightning, lasting a long time. It was wide, low, and had a very definite shape. One could even examine it. With its sharp edge it struck behind us at the bottom of the gorge, and both the gorge and the rocks reverberated, nearly deafening us and our horses.

Kurbanov's horse took fright. He became tense, reared up and stumbled on to the back of my Karabakh. My horse neighed, stopped dead, and struck at the other with his leg. "Hold your Donchak," I shouted to Kurbanov. The animal had buried his teeth in my horse's flesh.

The third slow flash of lightning made everything visible.

The Karabakh turned suddenly to go down the steep sloping path. In the next lightning flash I saw the Donchak's hoofs over my head.

On the right were sloping rocks and on the left the steep gorge. Far away I could hear the quiet swirling of the stream. A clap of thunder broke in the sky, and I jumped from my saddle, falling on my stomach across the path with one leg hanging over the edge of the gorge. I did not let go of the reins.

Kurbanov stroked his horse, which was trembling and rearing. I struggled to my feet, leading my horse with one hand, and with the other clutching the rocks.

The path became steadily steeper. The lilac lightning flashes had turned to white. Several big drops of rain fell on my face, and suddenly it became torrential. Water came flooding down the gorge. The stream made a terrific surf.

We stopped. In the slow, bright lightning we could see the white foam, the dark grooves made by the waves as they rose and fell, and the stones. The heavy rain battered against the white and black water. The smell of the wet wool of our burkas filled the whole gorge.

Large stones, knocking against one another in the stream, made a dull

noise. The stream was rising every minute. Above the noise of the thunder we could hear its distant rumbling growing louder and louder.

"A flood!" said Torpashev, and raised a frightened hand.

"We're for it!" he shouted.

Kurbanov's calm voice cut across our exclamations. "Follow me!" he ordered.

We rode away from the overhanging precipice along which we had been moving, down the slope and right into the stream. Our only hope was to get across to the gentler slope on the far side. Otherwise we were trapped. The lightning, thunder and heavy rain meant nothing to us now. We were conscious only of the roaring of the flood. The water surged powerfully over the stones. The surf dashed into our faces, but in the dark night and heavy rain we saw nothing.

My Karabakh was in front. The Anglo-Donchak disliked battling with the torrent. He tried to leap to the opposite bank, missed his footing, and was carried away by the current.

The Karabakh reached the stony bank: the Kirghiz horse followed. We turned and faced the river. The Anglo-Donchak leapt again. This time he reached the bank some distance away from us. We rode up the bushy incline.

The storm had flooded a deep lake at the foot of the mountain. The water overflowed, rushed downwards and joined the stream in the gorge, driving everything forward in its sudden mighty surge.

In the lightning we saw a high mountain of water like a moving bulwark across the gorge. It surged onwards with a steady roll, wrenching the stones from the river bed and uprooting trees. The wall of water almost passed over our feet and the turbulent stream filled the whole gorge.

On its surface tree stumps, branches, even whole trees still standing upright were being carried away, along with the corpses of sheep, dogs and other animals.

"Just in time," said Torpashev.

I was conscious of a deep respect for Kurbanov, who without a word took off his cap, emptied out the water, shook his burka and urged on his horse.

Beyond the gorge a flat, stony plateau began, narrowing to a knife-edge ridge. The wind blew towards us out of the night.

I could see nothing in front of me, and relaxed the reins. Right and left of me I felt a huge void.

Kurbanov stopped his horse.

"We must go calmly," he said. I could hear him getting out of the saddle.

I got off my horse and realised that I couldn't move. My eyes were useless—I could see nothing.

I bent down and felt the wet edge of the path with the palm of my hand. I picked up a stone in my right hand and dropped it at arm's length. The stone disappeared without a sound. The stone I dropped from my left hand also disappeared noiselessly.

I took off my burka and bound it to the saddle. I got on my knees and crawled forward a few steps, feeling the edge of the path with my hands.

We crawled for one or perhaps two hours. The wind blew hard. The high, narrow mountain seemed to be swaying from side to side.

The horses snorted nervously.

The lightning had stopped. We were crawling in calm silence. The downpour dwindled to a light rain, and then stopped altogether. The silence was supreme.

The ridge flattened, and the path began to descend again. Branches and twigs began to scrape our hands. We traversed a long, unseen landscape of firs, and were now on a grassy plain.

"Empty the water from your boots, and rub down the horses!" Kurbanov called, and from his calm voice I realised that the valley, dawn, and the enemy were near at hand.

2. *The Battle*

AT DAWN, IN A HEAVY MIST, WE ENTERED A LEAFY WOOD. THE TREES DRIFTED past us like a dream. We could see little but their thick roots, the damp stones, and the wet path under our feet. Then in the early morning wind the mist silently and strangely disappeared.

We reached the edge of the forest. The sky above was clear, and dawn began to break.

"It's not far now, said Kurbanov.

We examined our weapons. The horses stepped over the slippery grass. Suddenly Kurbanov dismounted. I got down too.

"Stay with the horses," Kurbanov said. "Keep your wits about you and hide the horses in the bushes. We won't be long!"

My heart began to tremble. I embraced the Lieutenant and Torpashev, and was left alone. Three saddled, obedient horses stood near me. I sat down on a bright red root of a fir tree.

In the silence of the valley I heard the sounds of battle, and the horses pricked up their ears and listened too.

A battle? Or perhaps not? Yet wait—surely a battle was being fought.

The battle came to me from the wide valleys. I was not myself—I was Torpashev and Kurbanov. I was dying for them, although they may not have been dying themselves.

Dreaming, I stroked the Anglo-Donchak.

"Kurbanov! Juma Kurbanov! Take everything I hold dear, all my belongings on the Soviet soil, take them, but come back alive and victorious. Do you hear, Juma? Try to stay alive, whatever you do!"

I love the country of our labour and minds. I love its great, victorious path. Born in the midst of great trouble, from the hopes of centuries, amidst human suffering and stirring battles, my country became a peaceful land.

Take all this, if it will help you, Juma Kurbanov, but come back alive!

The sun appeared. The Anglo-Donchak was the first to sense something new in our surroundings. He pricked up his ears.

Kurbanov came crawling up to my feet, his black eyes dilated and blood running down the side of his cheek. He began slowly lifting himself up with the help of his horse's stirrups.

Then Torpashev emerged from behind a fir tree, crawling and pushing a German prisoner before him.

Kurbanov and Torpashev had reached the valley just as a tank battle was beginning. They told me how they had passed over a hillock overgrown with young oaks, and had seen hares, both old and young, frisking backwards and forwards. Above them hawks were flying low and fast. Fawns, frightened, were leaping noiselessly behind them in disorder, the young ones in front and the older ones behind them. Some foxes followed them, and a flock of goats. The frightened animals were fleeing from the battle.

The green and consoling valley was full of rattling machine-gun fire and the rushing of shells. Torpashev and Kurbanov saw men carrying automatic rifles emerge from the forest. Suddenly an unexpected silence descended. It only lasted for a split second. Russian tanks emerged from a ravine.

A mine exploded nearby, and Kurbanov fell. One splinter had injured his heel, and another had cut his cheek. Torpashev lifted him up and would have carried him deeper into the forest.

"No," Kurbanov gasped. "Look!"

The ground and the forest shook. The trees whined and crackled. The lieutenant was sitting half-covered in dust and earth. Torpashev leaned him against the trunk of a young tree.

"Look!" Kurbanov repeated. Torpashev turned his head and saw a German tank so near that he could feel the warm air pulsing from the armour plating. The hatch began to open and a head appeared. The German looked around, emerged from the hatch and jumped down. The caterpillars of the tank were hanging loosely like a horse's bridle.

Out of the hatch a second head appeared, with squinting eyes and half-opened mouth. Following this vacant face, which amused Torpashev, appeared a third, surprisingly clean, with rosy cheeks. The two first-mentioned bent over the caterpillar tracks. The third, leaning out of the tank, gave them instructions, pointing with his finger.

"Go round the tank and nab him," whispered Kurbanov into Torpashev's ear, "and I'll shoot the others. Hurry up!"

Torpashev crawled through the thick bushes round to the other side of the tank, raised himself up and gripped the neck of the German who was leaning out of the hatch. The other two started up in fright. Kurbanov's automatic rifle silenced them.

Another German tank was approaching. There was no time to lose. Torpashev threw a hand grenade through the hatch, put Kurbanov over his shoulders, and drove the prisoner in front of him.

And now Kurbanov, his face and foot freshly bandaged, told me to put the prisoner—a German officer—in front of me on my saddle. He was dressed in a clean uniform, and covered in a dirty green mackintosh cape. He was wearing elaborate socks trimmed with a carpet design—the kind of socks the mountain dwellers, who wear them as part of their national costume, call "jupariki." He wore no boots. Perhaps it was more comfortable for him to sit in the hot tank in soft woollen socks. The brightly-coloured "jupariki" reached up to his knees. A woman had worked out their design, which was simple, tasteful and faultless.

From whose feet had this rosy and green German officer, looking like bad-smelling meat, dared to filch these "jupariki"? Was his victim dead or alive?

"A thorough-bred German!" said Torpashev smartly. "There is a black iron cross on his chest!"

"Don't let's touch his cross. Let him ride through our mountains displaying his award!"

His cap had fallen forward over his face. Before my eyes the naked back of the German's head bobbed up and down as the horse trotted along. He was fair-headed, and had a dirty, rosy skin under his hair. His hands were bound with a thin, Caucasian belt with silver ornaments on it. He smelt of damp earth, petrol and mutton fat. Perhaps before the battle he had filled his stomach at one of the mountain villages, gnawing the bones and holding them with both hands.

Soon it became evident that Kurbanov was too weak to sit in his saddle. He was swaying. Sometimes he slipped, then, holding on to the horse's mane, pulled himself back, only to fall sideways again after a few steps.

"Let us stop, and you can rest," I shouted to Kurbanov.

"No," he answered. "If I stop I'll never get up again."

He touched the horse with his Turkmenian whip. Then his head dropped to the horse's neck. The horse stopped.

Torpashev jumped off his horse, handed me the reins, and mounted the Anglo-Donchak behind Kurbanov, gripping the wounded lieutenant around the waist. In this way we reached the next hill, four of us on two horses. The third was riderless, his empty stirrups knocking against his sides.

As the wooded valley opened out before us, Kurbanov dropped his head like a sleepy child. His body became limp in Torpashev's hands.

I jumped from the Karabakh, put the German down on the grass where I could see him, and helped Kurbanov down.

Torpashev brought some water in his flask. Kurbanov recovered and looked at the prisoner for a long time. Then, in a hardly audible voice which was nevertheless commanding, he said: "Comrade journalist, you will look after me and the prisoner. Torpashev, hurry to staff headquarters, with a message."

Then he leaned his head against the oak trunk and closed his eyes. The German officer prisoner was lying on his back on the grass like a large green dummy. The dummy looked up at the sky with fixed blue eyes. It looked at the sun and the clouds, with bright blue gaps of sky between them.

The grass smelt strongly of honey. It was almost intoxicating. The fat bumble bees looked drunk. The tops of the fir trees rejoiced in the sunshine.

The bandage around Kurbanov's head was turning red. A streak of blood was dripping down his face. Two green flies were buzzing over his head.

Torpashev came up to him. "I told you to ride to headquarters," whispered Kurbanov, opening his eyes and then closing them again. Torpashev walked up to the Kirghiz horse, then turned again towards the lieutenant, whose face was grey.

Torpashev whispered in my ear. "Make a stretcher between two saddles for the comrade lieutenant, and carry him very carefully. I'll be back with you before long."

Then Torpashev prodded his horse and rode off through the rustling bushes.

I pulled Kurbanov's knife from its sheath, cut down two saplings and a number of branches, and began to make a stretcher. Kurbanov revived a little, and advised me. It seemed he had made this kind of stretcher before. He smiled at me, and explained: "My father and grandfather were wandering tribesmen."

I fixed the stretcher to the saddles. The horses were standing quietly, particularly my Karabakh. He is hot-headed, but a sensible and kind horse. Perhaps the animals were calm because they were tired. I strengthened the stretcher with two burkas and tightened it up. I was able to lift Kurbanov easily and carry him to the stretcher. His injured heel was swollen. I put some more cold water on it. He straightened himself out on the stretcher, without a moan, but his face was wet with perspiration. In his pain he bit his lip, and blood began to flow.

I wiped his face and put some grass under his head. "Thank you," he said wearily, and I was surprised, because Turkmenians are not accustomed to saying this.

We started. Above Kurbanov's head was the intelligent and worried face of his Anglo-Donchak. The lieutenant's legs stretched to the tail of my Karabakh. I led my horse by the reins and held a pistol in my right hand. The prisoner walked in front of me.

The distant noise of the stream was fresh and cheerful. By the time we got to the gorge, evening was drawing in. Carefully I drew the horses into the stream, facing the current. With great pleasure they slowly drank the swift-flowing water. Both raising their heads together they turned to look at the opposite bank, sighed, then bent to drink again.

Kurbanov lay above the stream in his stretcher, looking up at the sky and listening to the rippling of the water. Half the sky was covered with high rain clouds, lightened from below by the setting sun. The other half was blue and feathery like a bird, so beautiful in the evening light that I wished I could lose my human form and dissolve into the atmosphere.

The horses had finished drinking, but the prisoner did not want to cross the stream. He was nervous and excited; he took his iron cross and threw it into the middle of the stream. He sat down on the damp stones and covered his face with his hands. I didn't know what to do, and asked Kurbanov's advice. "Put him on my horse," he said.

We crossed the river.

Through the trees emerged an old man. He nodded, leaned on his stick and looked us all over. His appearance was so strange that the prisoner moved away in fear, and mumbled under his breath.

When I first saw him, I had the impression that the old man was tall. When I got used to him, however, I realised that he was quite short. His face was most unusual.

3. *The Mill*

I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR A MAN OF HIS SMALL STATURE TO have such a face.

Judge for yourself. In the middle of his long, bald face shone a huge, sensitive nose with large nostrils.

Kurbanov smiled. I was glad to see him smile, after so much unhappiness and pain. Like him, I was cheered by the sight of this peculiar nose on the kind old man.

He had crossed two hills before he met us. Torpashev on his way had met him, and asked him if he would shelter the wounded commander for the night, and save him from the dangers of the forest. Old Jambot, as he was called, took his stick and old axe and went towards the spot indicated by Torpashev.

All his life he had been a woodcutter in his native mountain forest, but when his hands and eyes became too weak for this work he became a miller.

One hour later we arrived at the mill.

The clouds were low over the mountains. The last rays from the sun were reflected on the pasture land. It was an almost holy light. Smoke from the mountain hamlet curled over the gorge. The clouds seemed to smell of this smoke and of the winter air. Far below the clouds the villagers' cocks were crowing.

On the path leading to the mill, another old man was standing in the high grass. Everything about him—hands, legs, face and nose—was somehow

childish. On his head he wore a large, brightly-coloured hat. He gave us a stern and slightly arrogant look from under its wavy brim. Silently he came up to us, and skilfully helped us to lift the stretcher on to the damp grass. We took Kurbanov inside the stone mill.

I went out to help Jambot with the horses. After we had put the animals in the stable and were walking towards the mill, the clouds came down low over us and everything seemed to be enveloped in one big cloud. Inside the mill there was a room with walls made of huge stones.

It was quiet and homely. We became accustomed to the regular rolling of the river, and soon no longer noticed it at all. The grains of maize were flowing down to the mill stone, and soon a pile of flour accumulated. One could sit and watch this scene for a long time, relaxing in every muscle.

On the floor were rows of skin sacks, roughly made, with the wool still on the inside. Inside the sacks was the grain.

Through a hole in the floor we could see the shining stream. On the other side of the stone wall was a rushing waterfall.

The lantern light shone on the damp dust. In the corner of the room was a low bed made of stones and grass and covered with a burka. On the hard surface of this bed, where the two old men were accustomed to sleep, Kurbanov lay stretched out. His face was calm and interested. His large, benign eyes watched the tiny miller piling up blocks of wood in the other corner.

I covered Kurbanov with my burka, and he whispered: "Thanks, brother." His voice sounded contented, and the words were happy, like those of a children's song.

Through the half-open door we could see some violet flowers. Though they were growing some distance away on the clouded hillside, they looked as though they were right on the doorstep, they were so large.

Inside the dark, warm mill there was an old-fashioned kind of comfort. The old man lit the fire and put some manure on it. Smoke filled the room.

I felt as though I were in my own native home. It was a strong, child-like, grateful feeling. I was grateful for everything around me. I thought I had lost this feeling I had known in childhood, but now, unexpectedly, it came back to me.

It seemed that Kurbanov also experienced this feeling, for his voice was happy. He whispered: "Here we are in a nomad caravan!"

I remembered vaguely the hills, mountains, towns and days in Caucasia, where I spent my youth.

High flames filled the stove and lit up everything inside the mill—the bright stream of grain, the slowly-turning millstone, the sacks and the black walls.

Kurbanov said happily: "These millers certainly know how to make themselves comfortable. Just like our place in Kopet-Dag! There are slight differences, but you'd hardly notice them."

Big-nosed, merry Jambot took down a leg of fat mutton from a wooden peg and began to slice it, giving Kurbanov and me a knowing look. Then he washed a black saucepan, filled it with water and put it into the stove, chatting to his old mate in a mountain dialect I could understand.

The mutton began to boil, and we were half-asleep near the warm stove, completely immersed in our thoughts and more in heaven than on earth.

The two old millers did not disturb us. They knew how we felt. From time to time they would glance at us, and then go on with their interminable chatter about our horses, Kurbanov's wounds, the black planes, the mountain battles, the prisoner, the war.

"Even you, shameless Jambot, could not imagine such a war," said arrogant Kichibatir calmly.

"So I'm shameless, am I?" said big-nosed Jambot, smiling to show he had not taken the other's remark seriously. "Shameless yourself! Remember how they used to call you 'Monkey'—you were never content with one wife at a time! You are only little, but you think you're a 'knight.' You're as talkative as the babbling village river. Well, there's nothing to be done about it. It's your family background, and anyway it's all over and done with. But talking of shameless," he said, "even I could not imagine a more shameless creature than this," and he pointed to the German officer. He looked hard at the jupariki on the German's feet, and he pondered a long, long time.

After a substantial supper, we immediately fell asleep.

During the night I awoke. Inside all was complete silence, but outside, among the mountains, thunder was beginning. Now it would roll and rumble right over the mill, now it was faint in the distance.

Kurbanov slept calmly enough opposite the stove, but from time to time he would moan slightly in his dreams.

Jambot slept near the prisoner, one hand resting on him. The other miller was not asleep. He was on his knees. The weak light from the lantern fell on his head. The wood in the stove had long since turned to charred ashes. The last flicker fell on Kurbanov's face.

The old man was kneeling down and staring at the legs of the German officer, clad in their splendid mountain jupariki. Then I heard him mumbling something. I thought he was praying, and I listened to his measured words. Yes, he was praying. A clap of thunder resounded over the mill and rolled into the distance.

4. *A Prayer*

I WAS LYING MOTIONLESS, AND BEGAN TO CATCH THE OLD MAN'S WHISPERED words. This was his prayer:

"My great Lord! During my whole life I have wanted a little good fortune. I don't want it now. I swear to you that I no longer want it.

"When I was born of two poor parents, you didn't give me any talent. I was growing up and praying to you to give me some talent to comfort those whom I, a starving man, loved. And you didn't give it to me. You didn't even give me your warm love.

"Didn't I love active, strong Fatima more than myself? Didn't she love me? Wasn't I like a smile for her? Remember how our thoughts were always together, like young foals in love? Try to remember, and laugh at my thoughts if you can. You took my Fatima and gave me nothing to replace her.

"Never mind, I am an old man now. That which I wanted, and wanted with my whole body, no longer burns in me. My love has been snuffed out. Is there any more heat in it? No, it is dead. For me it is like ashes. I have no use for it now.

"I asked you for peace and fortune so that others could envy me. I wanted those who were richer and better fed to envy me. You didn't grant me those things, either.

"I wanted friends. I have only one friend now, foolish Jambot. I have no one to love, so I love him.

"I wanted children. That forced me to take a disreputable, good-looking woman. I didn't love her, but I was always kind and simple with her. My gentle kindness made her become an honest woman, and she was happy to bear me two sons.

"Do you remember them? The elder was kind Mamet. The young one, Ali, was sharp-witted but sly.

"They were both clever horsemen. They were builders of the future. The Government rewarded them with honour and gratitude, I'm telling you.

"Who am I? I am an old Soviet man with no wealth. I envy no one. Please believe me.

"You took my sons. They died on the battlefield. Glory to them, but not to you. Why did you kill them? I ask you, Almighty. The older one, Mamet, destroyed a black German tank with his own hands. The younger one, Ali, shot down a black plane. You saw to it that the other tank killed my Mamet, and another plane ripped my Ali to pieces. They were not your children. They were mine.

"Now, I don't want you to give me any talent, Almighty. I don't want love. I don't want any wealth. I don't want peace any more, either. Do I ask you to give me my sons back? No. Still, I have one last request.

"This is the request of an old man. *Turn this shameless one to ashes! Punish the one who is wearing my jupariki! Punish him once and for ever.* Don't you remember the brightly coloured jupariki embroidered with little petals by my Fatima? Why haven't I got them? Why aren't they warming my old legs?

"We are both old, you and I. We both know well how an old heart is warmed by memories of the best things in life—things which we no longer have. I ask you forty times in succession why these bright jupariki are not on my old legs. Were not they made in my own country? On whose dirty legs have you put them, Almighty?

"I don't want anything from you now. Nothing for myself. You can see for yourself the black planes, black tanks, and a black German. Turn him to ashes and disperse them over the bright mountains. Turn him into a thing of the black past and cover his remains with bitter grass.

"Turn him into the black night. Make it so that this damned night is a thing of the past, and that we will NEVER have it again. It is beyond imagination to have such black nights filling the whole earth with blood and grief. If you can hear me, do these things, great God of the valleys, of thunder and happiness."

The old man pronounced the last words with great solemnity.

As he fell silent, I dropped into deep slumber, so that when at dawn I was awakened by the sound of horses' hoofs at the mill door the sound seemed all part of the old man's prayer.

Kichibatir half-opened the door. The unseen sun was shining behind the mountain peaks. The Kirghiz horse poked his head through the doorway. In a voice soft with the morning air, Torpashev asked cheerfully: "How is our lieutenant's foot?" The Kirghiz horse inhaled the domestic air from inside the mill, and neighed.

"Oh, oh—beat them, trample them down!" shouted Kurbanov, waking up suddenly and sitting bolt upright in bed.

Torpashev saluted. "I am reporting, comrade lieutenant. Your orders have been fulfilled. The commander of the regiment has given the following orders: You, with the help of the military correspondent, should come to

regimental headquarters with the prisoner. I should find a guide and go down to the valley where we were yesterday during the tank battle, to find out . . ."

"I'll be your guide," said Jambot, pulling in his belt tighter and drawing himself up with a self-important air.

Kichibatir pulled him back. "You are an old man," he reprimanded. "Don't you remember how, twenty years ago, you fell down Horse Mountain?"

"Yes," said Jambot. "It took me a long time to reach the bottom. But I wasn't alone. There was a big fir tree with me. I cut it down, and it took me with it. I was young and inexperienced in those days."

"Now you are old, but just as inexperienced," said Kichibatir in a patronising voice. "I'll be our gallant warrior's guide."

"No you won't," said Jambot teasingly. "You'd be no good at this noble work. I am only seventy-seven, but you are a hundred and two. I can remember your age quite well. You are so old and tiny that the gallant warrior would lose sight of you every minute."

"Toss for it, then," said Torpashev to them both. "I'm in a hurry. You are very good arguers. You should be—you've been at it for 50 years!"

Jambot hastily took a dice from the bottom of his deep pocket, and showed it to Kichibatir. "I call nought," said Kichibatir nervously. Jambot threw the dice into the air. "I've won," he shouted in triumph. "You've always had nought all your life, Kichibatir," he said.

In a few moments Jambot rode up to the mill on a short-legged mule, and asked Torpashev in a docile voice: "Give me my orders, sir. Where shall I lead you?"

"Jambot," called Kichibatir persuasively, "bring back another German in jupariki. If you don't, you needn't bother to show your face here again."

"Patience, patience, father," answered Jambot. He straightened himself up in his worn-out, discoloured saddle and set off with Torpashev along the narrow path down to the gorge.

5. Punishment

KICHIBATIR GOT THE FIRE GOING IN THE STOVE, PUT ON THE REMAINS OF THE mutton to simmer, and disappeared in the high grass, saying he wouldn't be long.

He came back in company with a girl nearly twice as tall as himself, followed by some old mountain dwellers wearing their traditional white felt hats with wide brims. They led their strong, well-fed mules by the reins. Two old women in black dresses brought up in the rear.

"Her name is Orkuyat," Kichibatir informed the lieutenant, indicating the girl by his side. "She is the wife of our teacher, Ivan Matveyevich. He is a Russian cavalryman and has been in the war since it began, fighting the black Germans.

"Show her your wounded foot. Orkuyat has learned a lot from this Russian teacher; and if she can't heal you, I'll ask the old women to help. They know how to cure wounds with the mountain grass, roots and stones. We have here two such women. You mustn't mind their constant arguing.

"Before the war they argued because one of them sold the other a lousy cock. Since the war they have been arguing about the Germans. One of them—and she's a clever old woman—says the Germans are the most shameless and wild people on earth. The other, who is equally clever, says the Germans

are not people at all, but unknown beasts, half snake, half pig, that move clumsily over the earth like huge turtles."

Orkuyat, kneeling, skilfully changed the bandage on the lieutenant's foot. Kurbanov frowned, and his nostrils dilated with the pain.

I was going to tell Kichibatir, babbling like the village brook, to keep quiet, but then I realised he was only talking to take the lieutenant's mind off his pain. The old collective farmers arranged a stretcher for Kurbanov on their mules.

We had a quick snack from the mutton that was left over, and said good-bye to them all, including the modest, shy, beautiful Orkuyat. Then we set out. Kichibatir led the mules carefully and efficiently.

I was riding close to the lieutenant's stretcher, with my eye on the prisoner. The morning air was clear over the mountains. We were riding down to a gorge, threaded by a stream we must cross. Kichibatir stopped the mules by the water, stroked them, whispered into the ear of the mule in front, and quietly and unhurriedly got on its back.

I told Kichibatir to follow me, and prepared to lead the way. The prisoner was on the lieutenant's Anglo-Donchak, which I was leading by the reins.

The stream was wide and deep. The shadow of the fir tree at the top of the rocky bank reached only half way across. The Anglo-Donchak was frightened. The German sat stiffly in the saddle. The mules were used enough to the quick-flowing mountain stream, but the stretcher they were carrying was strange to them.

The stones on the bed of the stream were being forced along by the turbulent water. They were big enough to pull down the mules. I looked at Kurbanov. "Go ahead!" he said.

My Karabakh rushed into the stream, the Anglo-Donchak walking abreast. Suddenly the Anglo-Donchak slipped on a stone, and everything happened at once.

The water deepened and the Karabakh began to swim. The Anglo-Donchak was swimming by his side, eyes dilated with fear. I held him by the mane. The Donchak suddenly turned over on its side and refused to swim, though the shore was near.

The prisoner disappeared in the stream. The Karabakh struggled into the shallower water by the far bank. I fell into the water, grazed my knees painfully against the stones on the bed of the stream, stood up, fell again with the water completely enveloping me, came up, and fought my way towards the shore.

My Karabakh followed me. I did not lose hold of the Anglo-Donchak's reins. The water at the edge of the stream reached to my belt. I pulled the frightened Anglo-Donchak towards me. I looked back, but could see no one, neither Kurbanov, nor the old man, the mules or the prisoner.

The clear, flowing stream knocked the stones together. The Karabakh and the Anglo-Donchak stood on the stony bank facing the rocky hillside with its lonely fir tree. A few yards down, the stream made a sharp turn. I ran over the rocks, and the two mules came into view, trying to pull out of the water the broken stretcher, to which Kurbanov still clung.

The lieutenant's face was turned towards me. He shouted something, but I could not hear a word above the noise of the stream. His forehead was cut, and as fast as the water washed the blood away, it continued to pour down his face. At last the mules pulled him out to the shallow water near the bank.

I rushed to him. He shouted to me angrily: "The German, the German!"

The Nazi officer, his clothes wet through, was running up the side of a nearby rock. He disappeared behind the fir tree, then appeared again high up, clear against the bright sky. I ran towards the foot of the rock and up the hillside.

The German was running along the very edge of the gorge, turning round its precipitous corners. And jumping over the thick roots, Kichibatir was running towards the German. He was racing, invisible, across the earth; only his hat could be seen, bobbing up and down.

The old man reached the sloping edge of the gorge and the German caught sight of him. The German looked down at the deep void of the gulf and raised his foot to kick the old man over the side. He failed.

The old man leapt high, like a cat, and threw himself on to the German's back. The prisoner staggered and fell over the edge of the dark gorge, with the old man still clinging to him. Small stones followed them down, and a cloud of dust covered them.

When I reached this spot even the dust had dispersed.

I stood for a while on the edge of the gorge, looking down. I thought I could hear the stones still falling, but it was only the swish of the stream.

I came back to the lieutenant. He was sitting on a stone shivering with the cold, and with his bloodstained hands was bandaging his head. Nearby, among the stones, the horses were cropping the short grass.

I helped the lieutenant to bandage his head with a handkerchief, brought his Donchak up to him, and rode on my Karabakh down to the forge to look for the body of the old man.

I did not find it. But where the stream was at its widest, filling the whole gorge, I saw his coloured hat floating.

(THE END)

